

RETRO | CURRENT GEN | INDIE | TABLETOP | TOYS

FUSION



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FUSION

Retro-gaming
Publisher
since 2006



www.patreon.com/fusionmagazine

TOYS

FUSION

FUSION
ANNUAL 2023
SUMMER SPECIAL

FUSION Issue 50

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It's safe to say that we're a long way away from the phototypesetting machines and process cameras used to produce CRASH, ZZAP!, and Amtix every month back in the 1980s. I tried my hand at "desktop publishing" in 1995 when I joined a YTS course. I remember getting the hang of the 'Publish-IT' software (<https://bit.ly/46LZE6b>) and completely ignoring the work I was supposed to be doing in favour of creating my own magazine. I've forgotten what it was about, but it was probably an Amstrad magazine because I was still clinging to my broken 464 at that point. Anyway, the course didn't end well, and much rock and roll and debauchery followed. But, the seed of creativity was planted, and my love of print media, which started with comic books, CRASH, and Amstrad Action, has grown with me. If you'd told the young (and insane) me that I would eventually be at the helm of a monthly gaming magazine on its fiftieth issue - I would probably have laughed at you, and yet, here we all are at the FUSION-FIVE-O!

To celebrate, we have a selection of FUSION-themed articles for you this month that we hope you'll enjoy. We have a blast putting the magazine together, and the most important part of that process is you. Without your continued support, we couldn't have reached this milestone together. It's an achievement shared by us all, whether you're a reader or a member of the team that produces the magazine. On behalf of everyone here - Thank you! We look forward to making the next 50 issues with you.

MISSION START!



Editor
Ben Honebone

THE STORY OF

FUSION

MAGAZINE

AS FUSION MAGAZINE REACHES 50, IT'S TIME TO LOOK BACK WITH ANDREW FISHER AT HOW THE MAGAZINE CAME TO BE – AND HOW CHRIS WILKINS WENT FROM RETRO FAN TO PUBLISHING MAGNATE.

■ The year was 2005, and the UK retro scene was buzzing with multiple events. But there was a major shock; Live Publishing, the company behind Retro Gamer, surprisingly went into administration during the summer. When fans convened in Kenilworth for December's event – The Retro Ball, raising money for testicular cancer charity Everyman – there were plans for Retro Gamer to return with new publishers Highbury. But it wasn't the only magazine around.

Celebrating the Retro Ball was Issue Zero of Retro Fusion – A4 sized, 32 pages stapled together, and priced at £2.00. This was Chris's first attempt at making a magazine with the assistance of Alligata Media. The Retro Ball (organised by Pete Beverley with help from Chris and Leigh Koopa) was the major news story. Among the articles were a review of the Back In Time Live event from Manchester and the DVD launched there, pieces on the SAM



Above: The snowy cover of Retro Fusion issue zero, from December 2005.

Coupe, the “best presents ever”, and a retrospective of the film Ghostbusters (and its related games). This would set the tone for future issues.

Issue 1 of Retro Fusion from the newly christened Pendragon Media arrived in April 2006 at £3, with 68 A4-sized pages and staple binding.



Left: Rob Hubbard was interviewed for issue 1 of Retro Fusion.



The big news was that the magazine was being sold in Gamestation's 200 stores. The strapline read "Games : Retro : Arcade : Computing : TV : Film : Nostalgia : Your Childhood", and the cover star was Sonic the Hedgehog. Among the big names involved were Archer Maclean, Rob Hubbard, Spectrum artist Mark R Jones, and the Oliver Twins. Star Wars Toys, The A-Team, and a review of The Retro Ball broadened the content.

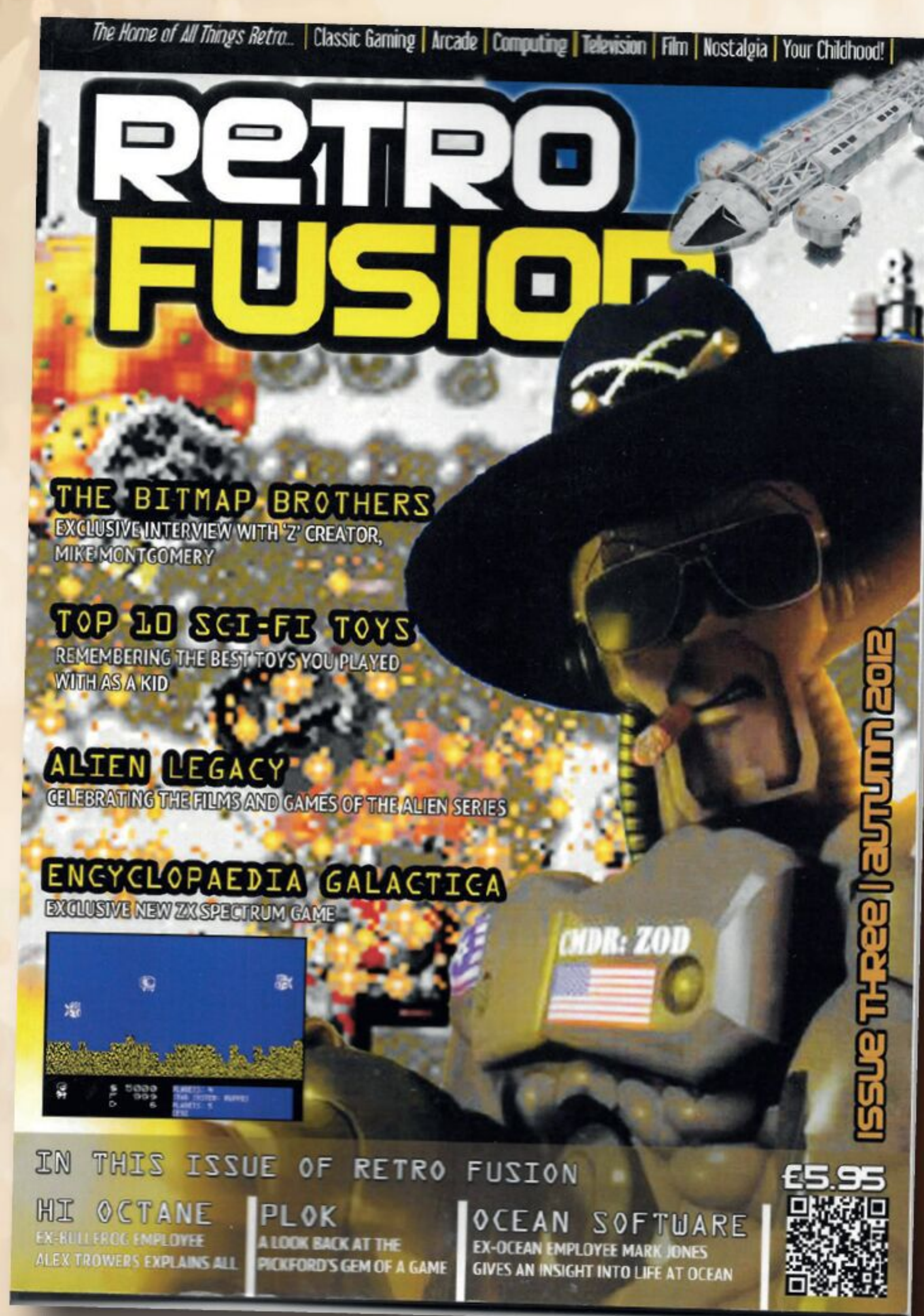
Issue 2 for July & August 2006 featured the history of *Subbuteo*, *Knight Rider*, and the Rubik's Cube. It was still priced at £3 for 68 A4 pages. The cover binding had been changed to make it feel more professional, and the content was organised into defined sections. Jon Hare talked about *Sensible Soccer*, and Andrew Oliver discussed how the games industry had evolved. Archer Maclean restored a *Missile Command* cabinet while Martyn Carroll talked about rock music-related games. Although the next issue was planned for September 2006, this marked the end of the Gamestation partnership.

It would be 2012 when Fusion Publishing became Fusion Retro Books.

A meeting between Chris and Newsfield founders Roger Kean and Oli Frey at a retro event led to Chris and Roger collaborating on The History of Ocean Software, a hardback book funded by a Kickstarter campaign. With new impetus, Chris sought to revive Retro Fusion.

Issue 3 was launched in the Autumn of 2012, with an exclusive interview with Mike Montgomery of the Bitmap Brothers (and cover art from strategy game *Z*). The sections of Issue 2 were retained but with a stronger cover; the cover price rose to £5.95 for 72 (slightly smaller) pages of content. Chris shared his love of the Disney film *The Black Hole*, the Pickford Brothers looked back at SNES platformer *Plok*, and the games of the Alien franchise were investigated. Alex Trowers of Bullfrog revealed how *Hi-Octane* went from concept to finished game in just seven weeks. Issue 3 was also notable for launching the "Fusion Loves" feature, a two-page spread with a large screenshot celebrating *Walker* on the Amiga. My copy of issue 3 is signed by Mike Montgomery, the Oliver Twins, and Mark R Jones.

Issue 4 would turn out very differently



Right: Editor Chris Wilkins wrote about his favourite film, *The Black Hole*, for *Retro Fusion* Issue 3, and created the 'FUSION Loves' series in the process.

when it was released in May 2013 to celebrate the Revival event in Wolverhampton (attendees got a free copy). This issue became A5-sized, with no cover price displayed. Issues 3 and 4 were available to pre-order to cover printing costs, with the remaining copies sold online. The content sections were labelled Fusion, Gaming, Retro, and TV & Film. With features on French games, the Supergun for playing arcade boards, and Mark R Jones talking about his time at Ocean, there was a lot packed into 32 pages.

Chris would expand *Fusion Retro Books* with a series of books launched via Kickstarter campaigns. These included *The History of US Gold*, *Let's Go Dizzy* (with the Oliver Twins), and the trilogy of *Spectrum Games Books*. The two *Pixels* books, *The Story of the Commodore 64* in *Pixels* and *The Story of the Commodore Amiga* in *Pixels*, were celebrated with an event at the Centre for Computing History in Cambridge.

Continuing the association with Roger and Oli, *The Fantasy Art of Oliver Frey* – initially published in 2006, celebrating Oli's work in magazines, computer game covers, and books – received an Extended Edition featuring more

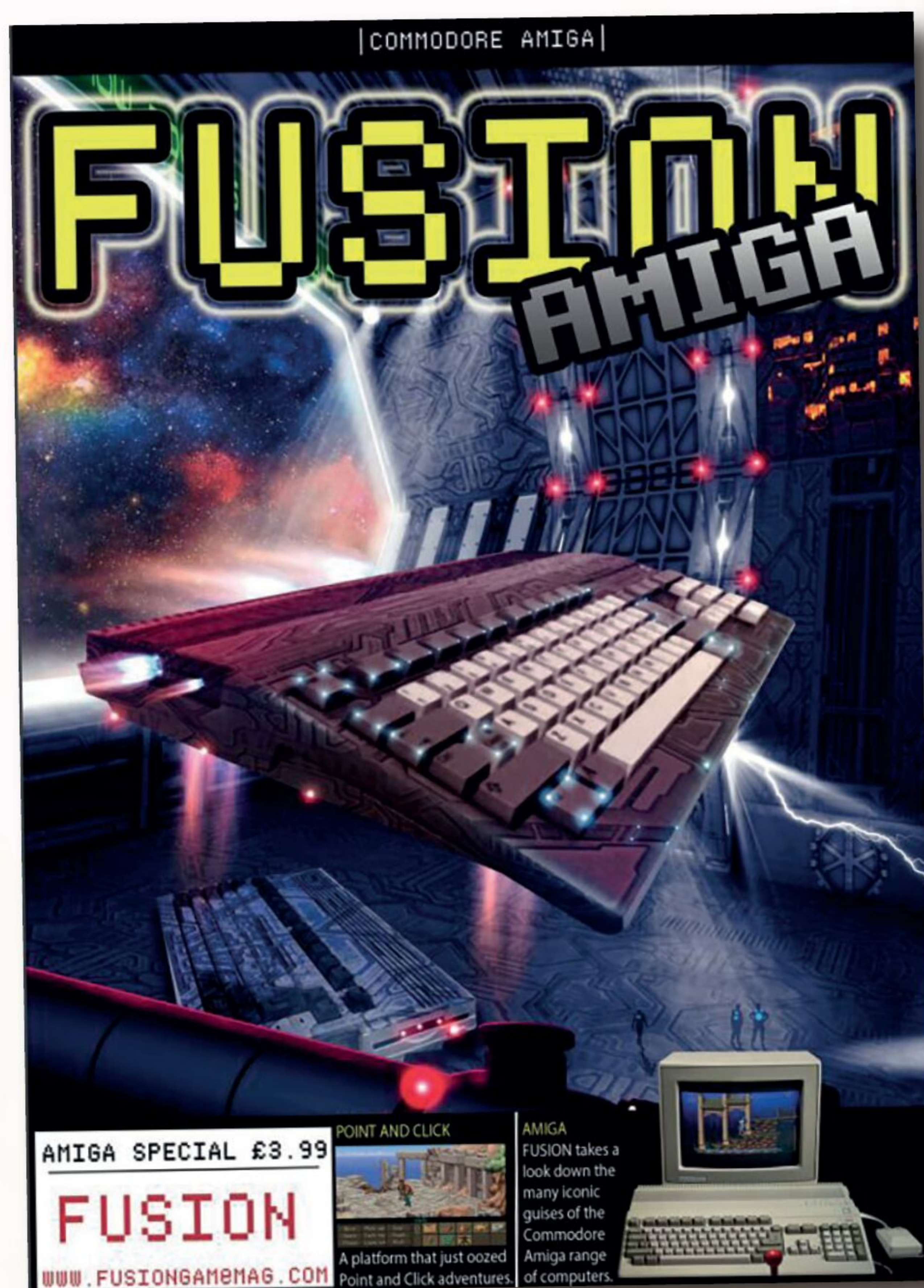


artwork. After much negotiation with Future Publishing, the first of the revived *Newsfield Annuals* was launched. *CRASH* came first, followed by *ZZAP! 64*. These *Annuals* started as A4 with all new content, funded by Kickstarter campaigns that gave additional perks, including games, mugs, and posters/prints.

In 2018, Chris revived *FUSION* magazine in its now familiar A5 size of 60 pages, publishing



Above: Issue 1 of FUSION with its stunning Wil Overton artwork. **Below:** The FUSION Amiga Special.



a new issue every two months at first. The tagline became “Retro | Current Gen | Indie | Tabletop | Toys”. Artists including Wil Overton and Trevor Storey would provide covers, with issue one’s being based on *Cybernoid* and accompanied by a limited-edition vinyl EP. ‘FUSION Loves’, and later ‘FUSION Fails’, would be part of the new layout. Roger would also contribute, telling readers how a classic Oli cover had been created. FUSION would get its own regular A5 Annual and Special editions of FUSION covering various computers (C64, Amstrad, Spectrum, Amiga), consoles (Dreamcast), games (Resident Evil, Final Fantasy), Japan, and the Toys summer special annual.

The big change came with the Patreon subscriptions. Readers could get a PDF of the magazine on release. A print subscription delivered each issue before it went on general sale. With more negotiation, the Newsfield trinity of CRASH, ZZAP! 64, and AMTIX would be revived – joined by ZZAP! AMIGA. ZZAP! came with a digital cover disk, and a second physical tier gave a 5.25” disk and printed sleeve. However, the worldwide shortage of floppy disks put a stop to that. CRASH also tried out a physical cover tape with specific issues. ZZAP! and CRASH used classic Oli cover art (where appropriate, substituting other pieces when needed). AMTIX would be published every three months, the two ZZAP!’S and CRASH every two months, and FUSION became monthly.

It was sad news that prompted the transfer of the Newsfield trademarks to Fusion Retro Books, with Roger and Oli suffering from failing health. The separate Fusion Retro Merchandise site was designed to sell Oli’s art in several forms, including posters, mugs, and coasters, alongside work from other artists – including Trevor Storey’s excellent art for ZZAP! and FUSION and the works of Steinar Lund and John Smyth.

This brings us up to date, with Fusion Retro Books bringing out new books – including ZX Nightmares (its C64 equivalent is due in 2024) – and the magazines keeping readers informed about their favourite machines. I’ve been part of the story all along the way and enjoy writing for FUSION. I’ll end by paying tribute to Roger Kean and Oli Frey, who are sadly no longer with us. ■

COLLECTORS CORNER

We know from speaking to our readers that many like to collect FUSION, but I wonder how complete your collections are. Here are three of the more unusual issues of FUSION that you might not know about.



THE ORIGINAL ISSUE 19

RARITY LEVEL: 3

Featuring Wally Week on the cover, there are two versions of issue 19. The second printing of this issue is fine, but the reason we had to have this issue reprinted was due to a mistake by the printers themselves. Somehow, Toy Polloi's Ghostbusters article had pages duplicated and was subsequently sent out to all subscribers. The error was rectified, and a new batch of issue 19 was sent out, but it does mean there are a few hundred of the original issue 19 out there somewhere.

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FUSION



FUSION

ZZAP! LIVE

ZZAP!
LIVE!
2023



FUSION ISSUE 0

RARITY LEVEL: 10

When FUSION was announced at Revival in 2018, Chris Wilkins and Alan Hammerton had been discussing launching a magazine over the previous few months. A digital mockup was created to allow marketing images to be produced and displayed at the event. Chris also had two physical copies of this mockup printed so that people could see how the magazine would actually feel in the hand; the A5 format was not common at the time. One copy's whereabouts are unknown, and one copy is held by Alan, making issue 0 of FUSION the rarest of them all.

THE ORIGINAL ZZAP! LIVE! EVENT SPECIAL

RARITY LEVEL: 8

Already a limited-edition member of the FUSION family, the show guide for the 2023 ZZAP! Live! Event was also not the first version that was printed. There was an original print run of the event guide, but the printing quality was very poor – so much so that it was reprinted, and at the same time, several changes were made. The original batch was never sent out or sold; they were pulped, but a few copies were saved, making this a rare edition of FUSION.



In Good Faith

This issue of Fusion is our 50th, and we're so proud of what we've achieved and look forward to the future of another 50 issues. With celebrations and anniversaries in mind, I was reminded of a recent spat I found myself involved in on the interwebs. It all centres around what is considered an anniversary, a birthday, or a general acknowledgement of a special date in gaming history.

As a huge Dreamcast fan, I find myself drawn to many celebrations of game release dates specific to the console. I love focusing on a game when its release anniversary comes around; it gives us a chance to look back on it, play it again, and share the retro love with others. But, one aspect of the Dreamcast community that irks me is what happens when the 9th of September rolls around each year.

Before I get stuck into my rant about this seemingly hallowed day for the Dreamcast community, I want to put one thing straight. A console or game's BIRTHDAY is the first day it was released - anywhere in the world. It cannot be changed. The date has been set, and nobody can rewrite history to suit their needs. I will not be moved on this. I will die on this hill, if need be.

With that affirmation out of the way, let me explain. I get so frustrated on the 9th of September because hordes of US retro gamers start proclaiming that it's the Dreamcast's birthday. Yes, we all remember the iconic 9/9/99 release of the system in North America, and it's rightly celebrated. But this is not the system's birthday. It is the release date of the system in that territory, nothing more. The Dreamcast's actual birthday is the 27th of November 1998. It's the day it was first released in Japan. I'm fed up with gaming history being rewritten from the point of view of American culture. To a gaming historian, the facts are important, and if my feelings on this are pedantic or over-sensitive, then so be it. I'll not stop correcting folks who get this wrong.

So, every September, I become the bad



11月27日

¥29



GODZILLA GENERATIONS

1998年11月27日発売

¥5,800 (税別)

開発: セガ・エンタープライゼス

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GODZILLA: THE GODZILLA



July

1998年11月27日発売

¥5,800 (税別)

開発: フォーティファイブ

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1998年11月27日発売

¥5,800 (税別)

開発: セガ・エンタープライゼス

GODZILLA ENTERPRISES, LTD., 1998



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1998年

¥5,800 (税別)

開発: セガ・エンタープライゼス

GODZILLA



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eamcast™

7日発売

¥5,800(税別)



ソニックアドベンチャー

【アクション】
1998年12月23日発売

¥5,800(税別)
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SONIC ADVENTURE

【ハイスピード3Dアクション】
1998年12月23日発売

¥5,800(税別)
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セガラリー2

【レース】
1999年1月14日発売

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ブルー スティンガー

【ノンストップ・アドベンチャー】
1999年1月14日発売

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guy of the Dreamcast community and routinely get told to stop being a party pooper and concede that it's the Dreamcast's birthday. I get called names, I get laughed at, I get insulted. But it's worth it for me to keep the facts straight and ensure the correct birthday is still remembered. I love celebrating 9/9/99, but it has to be celebrated as the NORTH AMERICAN LAUNCH and not the BIRTHDAY.

It isn't just within the Dreamcast scene that we have this problem. Recently, at a gaming convention, I got talking to a younger gamer who had taken an interest in retro games. I found their passion enthralling and their knowledge impressive. As we continued talking, they kept referencing the video game market crash of 1983, which puzzled me. After some time, I deduced that they were referring to the North American video game crash of 1983.

It took me a while to convince this young gamer that the crash was specific to North America and the rest of the world was happily tapping away on its 8-bit computers. They showed me a YouTube video on their phone from another younger retro gamer from the UK. This gamer also had the wrong information and had made a video about how the NES had saved the entire global video game market. This worries me as it shows that younger gamers aren't discovering the correct historical information. In my opinion, as custodians of this information, it is our duty to ensure the younger generations have accurate facts.

Another small example of how our retro gaming history is being rewritten concerns the N64. Social media posts and YouTube videos would have you believe it was the first console with four controller ports as standard. It's a common error, and we can look back to Atari, over ten years before the N64 existed, and find four controller ports on their 2800 and 5200 models. Little inaccuracies like the ones I've mentioned here start to gain traction and are often assimilated into the gaming zeitgeist as 'facts'.

I know some readers may raise an eyebrow and think, "Chill out, Faith, it's just video games", and for the most part, I can't deny the logic in that. Ultimately, the history of video games is less important than politics, war, or other significant historical events. But I wouldn't be doing my job as a game journalist and historian if I let these things slide. I'll continue being the bad guy fighting for the truth to save you the headache. ■

BEN HONEBONE CHOOSES HIS ARMS AND LEGS CAREFULLY IN FROM SOFTWARE'S SLICK MECH SHOOTER REVIVAL.

■ As I write this, I'm nearing the end of my second playthrough of *Armored Core VI*, and I'm already planning my route through the game's chapters for my third run. I'd really like to get all three endings for the game, and I think there may be a secret fourth one, but I refuse to look online to confirm this. What started as a "risky purchase" has become one of my best gaming experiences this year.

Reaching this sweet spot with *ACVI* has been a bumpy road. It's a game filled with moments of frustration and periods where dogged determination is your only weapon. Yet somehow, I eventually beat that boss with the learned skills required or simply by choosing the right mech parts and weapons for the job to make it easy. Every obstacle in *ACVI* has a logical and straightforward solution; you just need to take the time to figure it out.

The key to victory is in your 'AC Assembly' – from here, you can change your mech's parts to create a light and fast angel of destruction or a hulking great tank that can dish out the pain and soak it up. The parts you choose to build your mech will dictate the kind of combat skills it possesses and the weapons it can carry. As you progress through missions, you'll earn cash to spend in the Parts Shop, allowing you to expand your options and change your tactics to suit different opponents. Crucially, you can also sell existing parts and weapons for the same price you purchased them for, meaning there is plenty of room for experimentation when (not if) you get stuck on a mission.

During my first playthrough, several encounters forced me to experiment with my mech's build in order to proceed. If I hadn't sold every part and weapon I had so I could start afresh with a new mech, I might still be stuck on the last mission of Chapter 1. Battling through these frustrations and getting to know how the mech parts interact is the core (pun intended) of *ACVI*'s gameplay. Once you've amassed a healthy supply



ARMORED CORE VI

FIRES OF RUBICON



Above: ACVI is a visual feast with plenty of huge structures and landscapes to stop and admire.



Above: Aerial combat is a ton of fun, and satisfying because it takes skill to balance the use of your boosters for attacking and dodging incoming fire.



Above: Melee attacks are very useful early on, and really pack a punch if you hit the enemy when they're stunned.

of parts that can support several different gameplay styles, the fun starts, and you can let rip with all kinds of reckless abandon.

The frenetic mech combat is divided into Chapters, each with several missions to complete. Some missions represent a choice or allegiance to a particular faction, and the one you pick will have consequences later as you work towards one of the game's three endings. This brings me to the story, which is all told through audio-only messages, mission briefings, comms chatter, and the odd stills montage. It sounds disappointing, and initially it was, but after five or six hours, I grew to love it. The vocal performances from the cast are strong, and their energy gives all the third-person blasting action an emotional identity. The story itself is also enjoyable, and while it won't win any awards for originality, it's undoubtedly an allegory for the times we all live in.

Visually, ACVI is a thing of beauty. The game runs on the *Elden Ring* engine, and the beautiful vistas and attention to detail we saw in the Lands Between return here, albeit in the form of the ravaged planet of Rubicon. There is enough visual variety on offer to help keep the missions interesting, and a few stand-out moments where the gameplay and graphics come together to make everything shine. The many bosses you'll face are a mixture of mechs whose size is comparable to your own or screen-filling beasts that provide a feast for the eyes and an exhilarating challenge.

ACVI's title theme begins with the same



Armored Core VI features an 'Arena' mode where you can pit your creation against a slew of simulated opponents. By defeating them, you'll earn credits you can use to upgrade your mech's operating system. These upgrades are essential to your success in the main missions and include handy perks like damage reduction, additional attacks, increased proficiency with weapons, and expansions like the Pulse Armour that sends out a damaging shockwave.





Above: The dizzying array of arms, legs, heads, weapons, and more for your mech is fun to experiment with, and doing so is essential to figuring out the best approach to missions.

three notes as the Terminator theme, which, while apt, can't have gone unnoticed by the composer. Nevertheless, the piece does its own ambient thing after that and doesn't resemble Brad Fiedel's masterpiece in any other way. The music during missions follows a similar motif, and is suitably atmospheric and retro-futuristic while accenting particular moments and serving as a backdrop to the sounds of combat and frequent comms chatter. The sound effects are suitably visceral, and direct hits come with a satisfying "CLANG!" from whomever is taking the hit.

I don't usually gel with From Software games. I've tried to enjoy the *Dark Souls* series numerous times over the years and failed, most recently with *Elden Ring*. I loved 2009's *Ninja Blade*, but ironically, it's considered one of their worst titles. I have yet to play any of their 90s output or any previous *Armored Core* titles, so placing my bets on this gem of a game has been a rewarding experience. If you're looking for *Dark Souls* with mechs – this is definitely not that. One of the most appealing things about *ACVI* is how easy it is to pick up and play. Most missions don't last longer than ten minutes, so chipping away at the game whenever it suited me became a comfortable routine without the pressure of worrying about save points.

There is a lot of replay value here, with the obligatory 'New Game +' beginning as soon as you complete the last mission of your first run. Tackling the chapters again but with all your parts, weapons and upgrades intact, is a joy. There are also extra missions to unlock and the multiple endings I mentioned previously to pursue. By the time you hit your second playthrough, you'll be showered with all the necessary parts and weapons to build every flavour of destruction you'll need. Enjoy. ■



BEHIND THE SCENES AT FUSION R GAMER

FAITH JOHNSON DESCRIBES A DAY IN THE LIFE AT FUSION'S ONLINE SIBLING.

This wonderful magazine is the hub for all things Fusion, but did you know we also have a thriving website called Fusion R Gamer that accompanies these hallowed pages? As a team member of the site staff, I write news articles, interviews, reviews, and features. We aim to report on as much retro news as possible and review as many new games as we can get our hands on. We also cover indie homebrew and national events and share crowdfunding projects that we feel are right for you, dear readers.

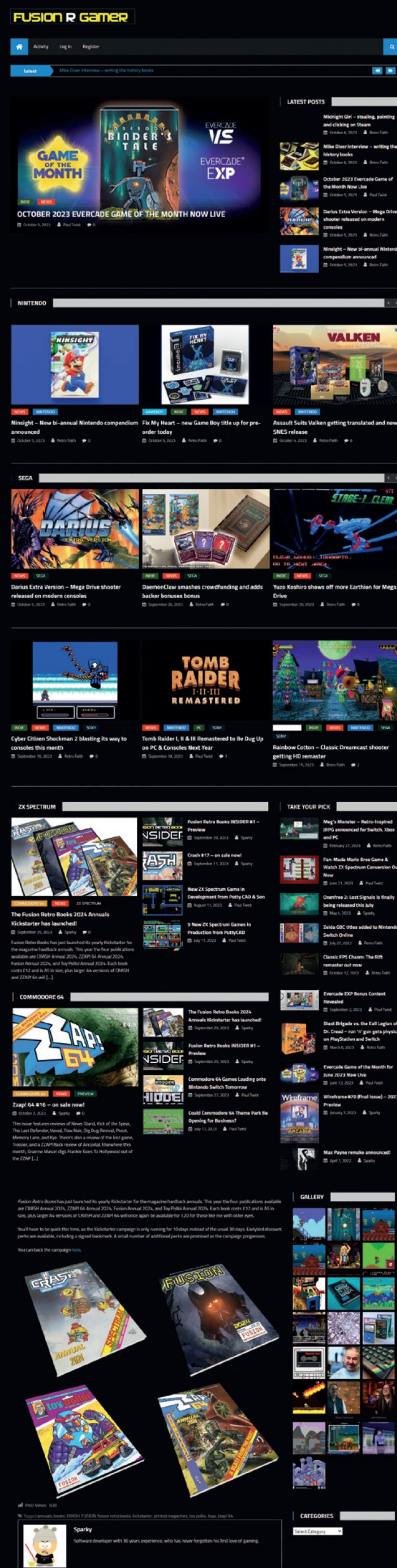
Fusion R Gamer has it all and is a great place to keep up to date with most of the Fusion Retro Books news and projects. I love what I do and have seen the site grow from a tiny acorn of a few scattered articles to daily posts covering a vast range of retro, indie, and AAA gaming. With all the fanfare and self-proclaimed excellence aside, what exactly do we do at Fusion R Gamer? I'll take you through a typical day at the virtual office we call Fusion's information superhighway.

Each day starts with a strong tea and a quick catch-up on the team's chat group. A usual day would yield nothing particularly exciting, but sometimes, some big news has broken overnight, and the team must check who is covering it. The last thing we want is duplication. We set some loose targets ourselves; we try to publish at least three articles daily during weekdays. On a perfect day, we have one review, news piece, and feature or interview covering modern and older games.

Our other task is to get the articles out to the broader Fusion family by posting them on the Fusion social media accounts and groups. Once the articles are shared, we return to the site if there is a comment to answer on a particular post. Behind the scenes, work continues researching potential news, interviews, reviews, and other projects to post on the site. We may still be playing a game for review or writing up our first drafts of an interview.

Another large chunk of our work is networking with developers, publishers, and PR firms to secure key codes for the latest games. We are emailing, messaging, and scouring web pages to try and get the best games to review. We focus on indie developers as they tend to be more approachable. The PR firms we have relationships with are essential to our mission, and we are always approaching new partners to work with. This approach also assists in finding the games we feel are important enough to feature in FUSION Magazine with a more extended review.

So, check out Fusion R Gamer if you haven't already, and let us know if you have any suggestions or comments. The team and I want to provide the best accompaniment to your FUSION experience; everyone is welcome. ■



<https://fusionrgamer.com>



For all your Retro news!



FUSIONRGAMER.COM



FUSION ISN'T THE ONLY THING TO TURN 50 THIS YEAR: GAMER, BROADCASTER, PODCASTER, AND COUNSELLOR IAIN LEE HAS ALSO TURNED 50. AS YOUR INTERVIEWER, PAUL TWIST, TURNS A YOUTHFUL 45, WE THOUGHT WE'D CATCH UP WITH PERHAPS THE MOST FAMOUS 50-YEAR-OLD GAMER IN THE COUNTRY.

Paul Twist: Let's get the clichéd opening questions out of the way: which game first attracted you to video games?

Iain Lee: Easy. The *Popeye* arcade cab. I must have been about seven, and we went on our first (and only) family holiday abroad. There was some weird bar that I remember as being just a white shed. My parents would let me go there on my own; the '70s were wild. They had a *Popeye* machine, and it just blew me away. Incredible graphics and addictive gameplay.

PT: What was the first console/computer you owned?

IL: We had an Intellivision with about eight versions of *Pong* and *Hockey*, but that never really grabbed me. The Dragon 32 was the first home machine that got me super excited. I remember my dad bringing it home one night. We were allowed to stay up late because he had something special. The thrill for me was being



**FUSION IS
50 AND SO
IS IAIN LEE**

able to type words, and they would appear on screen. It's hard to imagine now how exciting that was.

PT: When you first started gaming, did you ever imagine you'd still be interested in the hobby at 50?

IL: I knew I'd always love games. I drift away from it now and then but always end up coming back. The thing that amazes me is that I made a living out of video games and got to travel the world. My first trip to Japan was because of a documentary I was making in 1999. I recently returned with my two kids this year, which blew my mind.

PT: Is gaming still as much fun as it was when you were young(er)?

IL: No.

PT: Has there ever been a time in your life when you considered giving up gaming? If so, when, and what pulled you back in?

IL: When I went to uni in about 1993, I stopped playing; apart from a few drunken nights playing on a friend's Mega Drive, I thought it was kids' stuff. It wasn't until I played *WipeOut* on the Sega Saturn that I realised games had taken a huge leap since *Citadel* on the BBC.

PT: What do you think has been the best innovation introduced to gaming since you started?



Above: The *Popeye* coin-op was Iain's gateway into gaming.



Above: Iain is always happy to talk about his love of the Dragon 32 and BBC Micro 8-bit computers.

IL: Online gaming. I was obsessed with *Phantasy Star Online* on the Dreamcast and *Half Life* on PC. As a kid, that was always the dream, playing with mates remotely. When it became possible, I couldn't believe it. Oh, and another innovation that I miss is the original Xbox Online, when you could disguise your voice. That was fun. They should bring that back.

PT: Being a gamer for so long will give you a different perspective than most gaming podcasters. Is that why you launched your new podcast, *Random Access Memories*? That's a great title, by the way.

IL: I can't believe that title hasn't already gone. There was a podcast that used that name, but they only made a few episodes, and that was four years ago. When I came up with it (with David Turners from the Computer Game Show), I assumed it would have already been taken!

The basic premise of the new podcast is that someone comes on and talks about a game that means a lot to them. It's family-friendly. The chosen game is a springboard to other conversations about growing up, mental health, and stuff like that. Is it different from anything else? I don't know - you'll have to be the judge of that.

PT: What can we expect from *Random Access Memories*?

IL: No swearing and shows are no longer than 35 minutes. My whole broadcasting career has been long and rambling podcasts of 2 or 3 hours. I think for something like this, 35 minutes is the optimum. I'm inviting friends, but if any famous

people are reading this and want to come on, hit me up.

PT: As you know, this interview is for a games mag with a monthly print edition. Games mags have become much less prevalent in the internet age, but they persevere thanks to the passion of us older gamers. We know you write for Retro Gamer, so what is it that gaming magazines can offer that websites can't?

IL: I like that tactile physicality of magazines. I can dip in any time; of course, it's what I grew up with. Magazines themselves could be considered retro. And yeah, the back issues are filling up a crate in the garage, but I can go back to them anytime. Also, when I die, my kids can return to them and read something I did.

PT: On the subject of games coverage in the media, you presented the brilliant Thumb Bandits back in 2001. Do you think a video game show would work on broadcast television today? Or is that role fulfilled by streaming now?

IL: I think Twitch and YouTube have that covered pretty well now. Does anyone under 30 watch TV?

PT: What are you playing at the moment?

IL: *Mass Effect II* and *COD*. I'm dead predictable. Oh, and I played *A Way Out* with my 11-year-old. Please don't tell anyone, as I'll get



done for letting him play such a swearsy game.

PT: Recommend a game (from any era) to our readers that they might have missed.

IL: Reversi on the Dragon 32

PT: I know you're a fan of the 8-bit era in particular, so can you solve the eternally-raging playground argument once and for all and confirm which was best, ZX Spectrum or Commodore 64?

IL: Commodore was better. Spectrum was cooler. I hope that helps.

PT: PlayStation or Xbox?

IL: I have both. I play the Xbox more, mainly because I have it in my bedroom, but I prefer the PlayStation, although I think both next-gen consoles are a bit crap and haven't been exploited to the max yet.

PT: Now that those arguments are decisively resolved (or not), what is the best gaming system of all time?

IL: Dreamcast.

Huge thanks to Iain Lee for taking the time to answer our questions. His new podcast, 'Iain Lee's Random Access Memories', is available now on all the major streaming services. ■

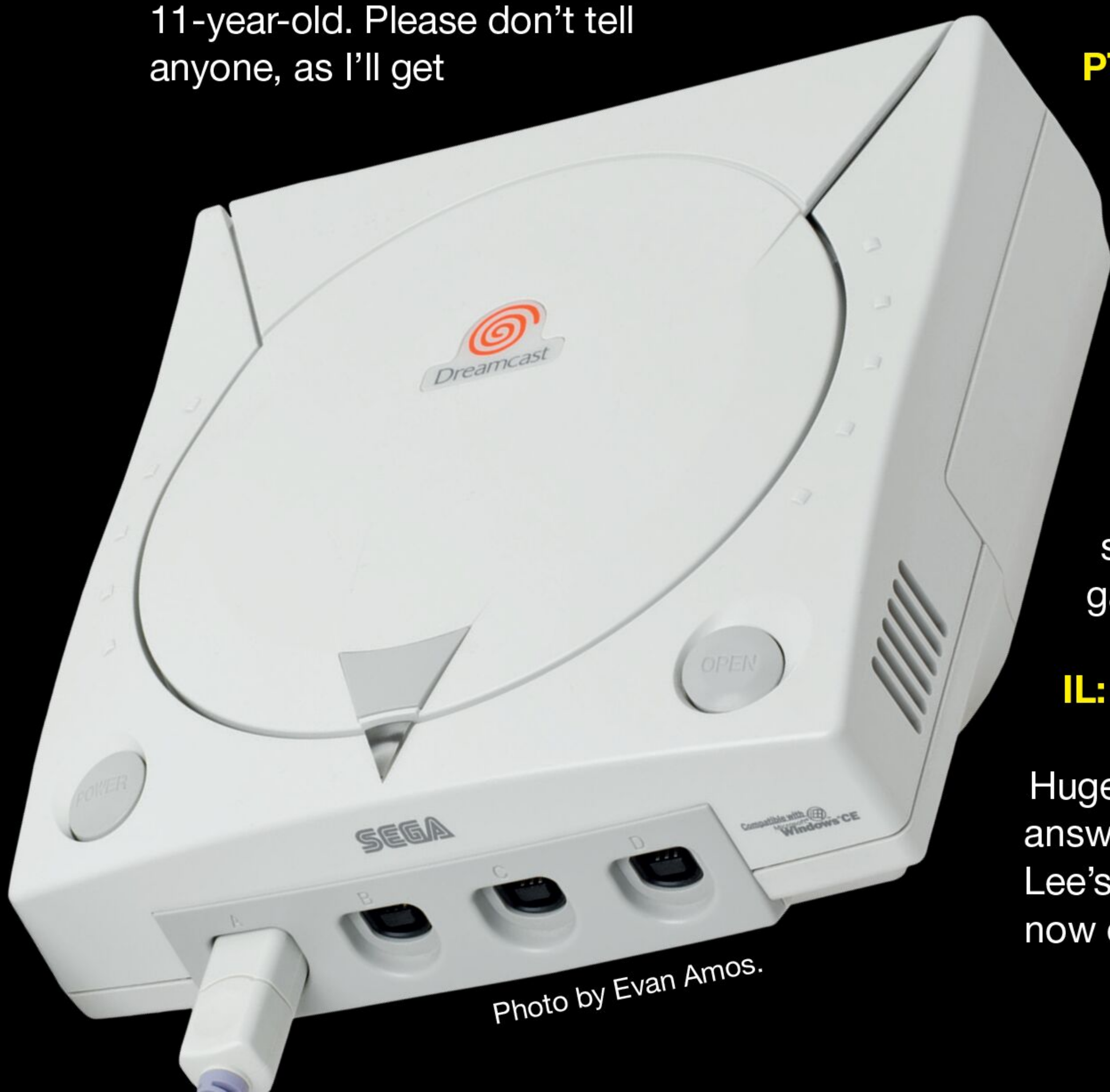


Photo by Evan Amos.



Above: The view outside is quite bland, even with the colourful thermal layer.

OUR RESIDENT NAUTICAL HISTORIAN, ANDREW OYSTON, CONTINUES HIS DEEP DIVE INTO THE DEPTHS OF RETRO.

■ In its somewhat truncated third and final season, *seaQuest DSV* introduced the concept of sub-fighters to the hot mess that the once poster child of sci-fi action/drama had become. It didn't really work as an idea, given that "dogfighting" in the water is a totally different concept from aerial combat. Yet, it has proved popular in gaming as well as television. One of the better attempts is Microprose's 1993 release, *SubWar 2050*.

With nearly forty missions over four campaigns, there is a fair bit to get involved in as you work to impress your corporate masters in the (now scarily) not-so-distant future. Tasks range from simple search and destroy jobs to escort protection, and there is enough variety to take advantage of the environment. Yep, as befits a submarine game, it's not just your enemies you must worry about. Fortunately, stealth here is very much an option, and the inclusion of thermal layers and active and passive sonar can be used to your advantage. So far, so sim-like.

You also have access to wingmen or, as they turn out to be, cannon fodder. They can do simple tasks but mainly distract the enemy while you get on with the job at hand. If you

SUBWAR 2050

find things too challenging, you can vary the enemy's skill level, but you should also be aware that completing the training missions and then jumping to the final campaign in the Sea of Japan is just asking for disaster.

As befits a 1993 release, the 3D graphics are functional, dependent as they were on the grunt of the host machine's processor. There are options to improve matters if you think they're chugging along. You can go with the full-colour shaded polygons, plain polygons, or a wireframe aesthetic. That would have been an important decision back then, as playing on a modern-day machine presents few issues, and the maximum settings give the visuals some flavour. It has to be said that the wireframe mode, although "retro," is pretty much pointless. *Air Supremacy*, a flight game by Psygnosis from around the same time, used wireframes and was torn apart by reviewers for looking like something out of the 1980s. It's the same here.

The sound effects and music are excellent and offer an atmospheric insight into what you'd think submarine combat might sound like. Similarly, the controls are pretty straightforward, and enough keys are used to make this feel like more than a simple shooter (Top Tip: do not use a mouse). Speaking of shooting, it will be torpedoes or rockets, with countermeasures if you are the target. If you take a hit, rudimentary repair systems will try to keep you in the fight. Each mission is scored on points, and you might earn a corporate award if you do well. Pass me a bucket stat!

Is *SubWar 2050* actually a simulator?



Above: This is the exciting bit, honest!



Above: Peak 90s UI whilst showing off your 3D rendering skills.

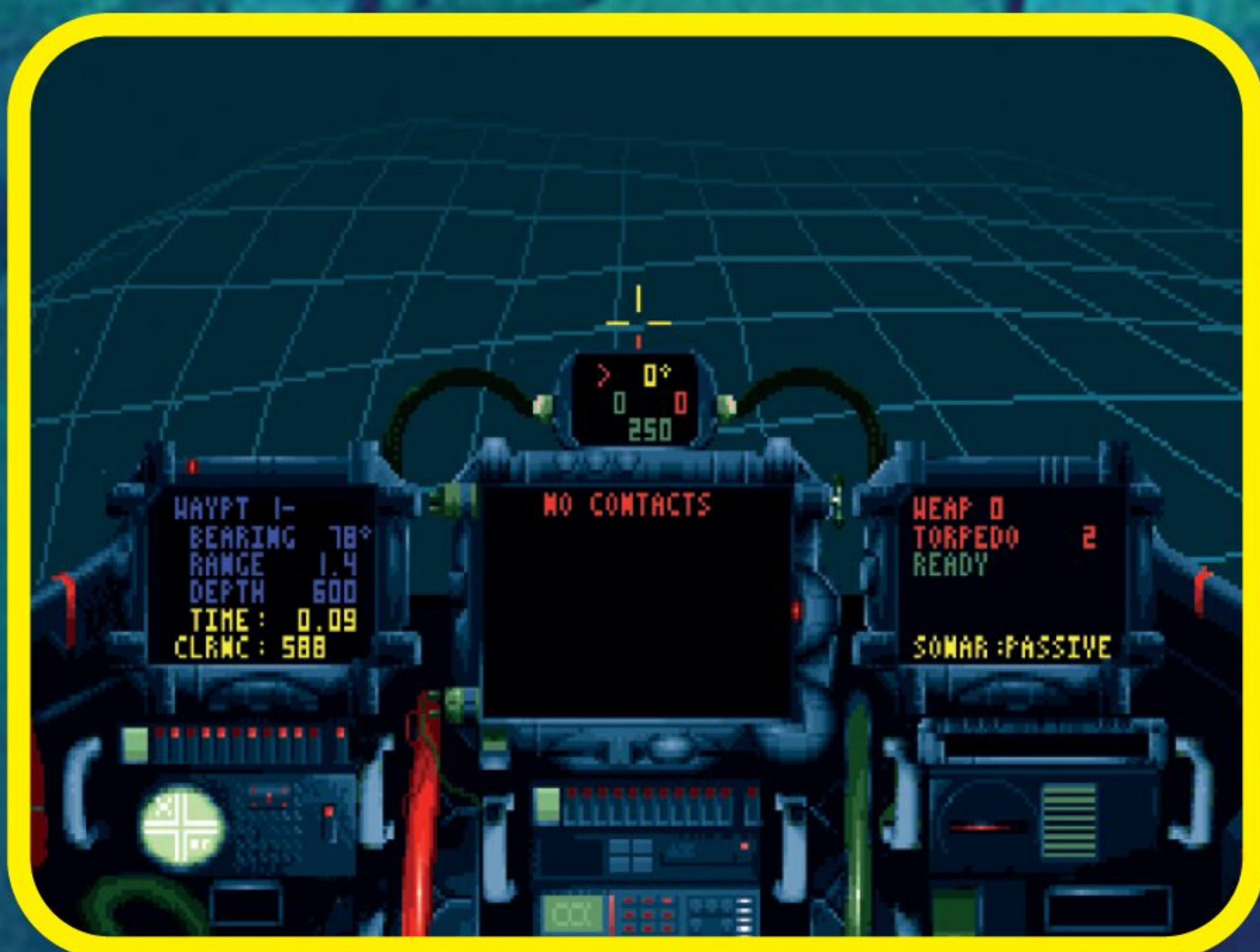


Above: Is it me, or does the sea floor look a bit...veiny?

POINT (OF VIEW



Textured - Oh, look! Someone's got themselves a la-de-da 486! Never has spending a few hundred quid extra looked so underwhelming.



Wireframe - Just because you can run this on a 1Mb 386SX at 16MHz doesn't mean you should. Even a bog-standard Amiga could do better than this.



Plain - That's better-ish. The sea floor looks like something you don't want to crash into. It is best used by those packing 25MHz or faster.

The manual contains the right words to fit a subsea combat game, but it never feels like you're underwater. The inky depths on-screen might portray the ocean, but it's not too much of a stretch to think of this as a deep-space shooter. Indeed, the physics of subsea warfare are window dressing, and you can amend options for sonar and the like to remove even more realism. Change the shape of the target, and you might as well be playing *X-Wing*, something remarked upon in contemporary reviews.

It isn't a fast-paced game either, which feels right in the context of its setting but makes progression through the campaigns a real slog. As much as I tried, I kept thinking that for all of the futuristic vibe, I much

preferred shaking off Mk48 ADCAPS in 688 *Attack Sub*. Missions often feel empty, yet when events take a frantic turn, there is some fun to be had. For those who dig the game, if you pick up a copy from <https://gog.com>, it includes an expansion pack with three additional campaigns.

SubWar 2050, then, is something of a halfway house. It's too arcade action-orientated to please dedicated sim fans, yet not consistently action-packed enough to quench a shooter fan's thirst. It scored in the high 70s to mid-80s upon release, and even now, it's not too bad a game. I'd give it a solid six out of ten, maybe a seven, just because, unlike *seaQuest DSV*, it doesn't have that bloody talking dolphin in it. ■

FUSION

Game : Angel Land - 8-Bit Bayonetta

Year : 2015/2017

System : Browser, PC

Words : Ben Honebone

■ In 2010, Platinum Games played a cruel April Fools joke on excitable gamers by announcing their intention to make a 2D version of *Bayonetta* called *Angel Land*. Announced via their now-defunct *Bayonetta* blog, the post was supported by a video on the official Platinum YouTube channel. It showed a colourful 2D side-scrolling version of *Bayonetta*, complete with angelic enemies and the ability to trigger the series' signature 'Witch Time' ability (<https://bit.ly/3MdqJXR>). But it was all a lie. Well, it was all a "joke". Ha ha.

Fortunately, this would not be the last we would see of *Angel Land*. Skip forward to 2015, and a tweet from a Platinum Games developer appears, announcing a new version of *Angel Land* with a link to the Platinum website's '404' page hosting it – ready to play in your browser (<https://bit.ly/46Trbmc>). Unfortunately, we didn't quite get the same game we'd seen in 2010's YouTube video. Bayonetta is fixed to the screen's left side and can only jump, double jump, and fire her hand cannons. Ground-based Angel soldiers and airborne Decorations endlessly approach from the right side of the screen. The key to success is controlling the flow of the easily dispatched footsoldiers while using your double jump to catch the tricky Decorations before they reach you. It's a challenging and twitchy little game that would have fitted right into the browser-based Flash games craze of the late 90s and early 00s.

Platinum yanked the chains of hungry *Bayonetta* fans one more time in 2017 when they released *Angel Land* on Steam under the name '8-Bit Bayonetta'. PC gamers awaiting the launch of the new 60FPS version of the actual game, *Bayonetta*, were treated to another hilarious April Fools joke when the demake was released and could be downloaded for free. A few days later - it vanished from the Steam store, no doubt making way for the release of the long-awaited (and fantastic) PC port. The most vexing thing of all is that *8-Bit Bayonetta* isn't an 8-bit game at all. It won't work on your Speccy, CPC, or C64. It's a bit of a joke, really. ■



SCORE

200



FUSION RETRO BOOKS PLAYER CARDS

HOW MANY WERE MADE AND DID YOU CATCH 'EM ALL?

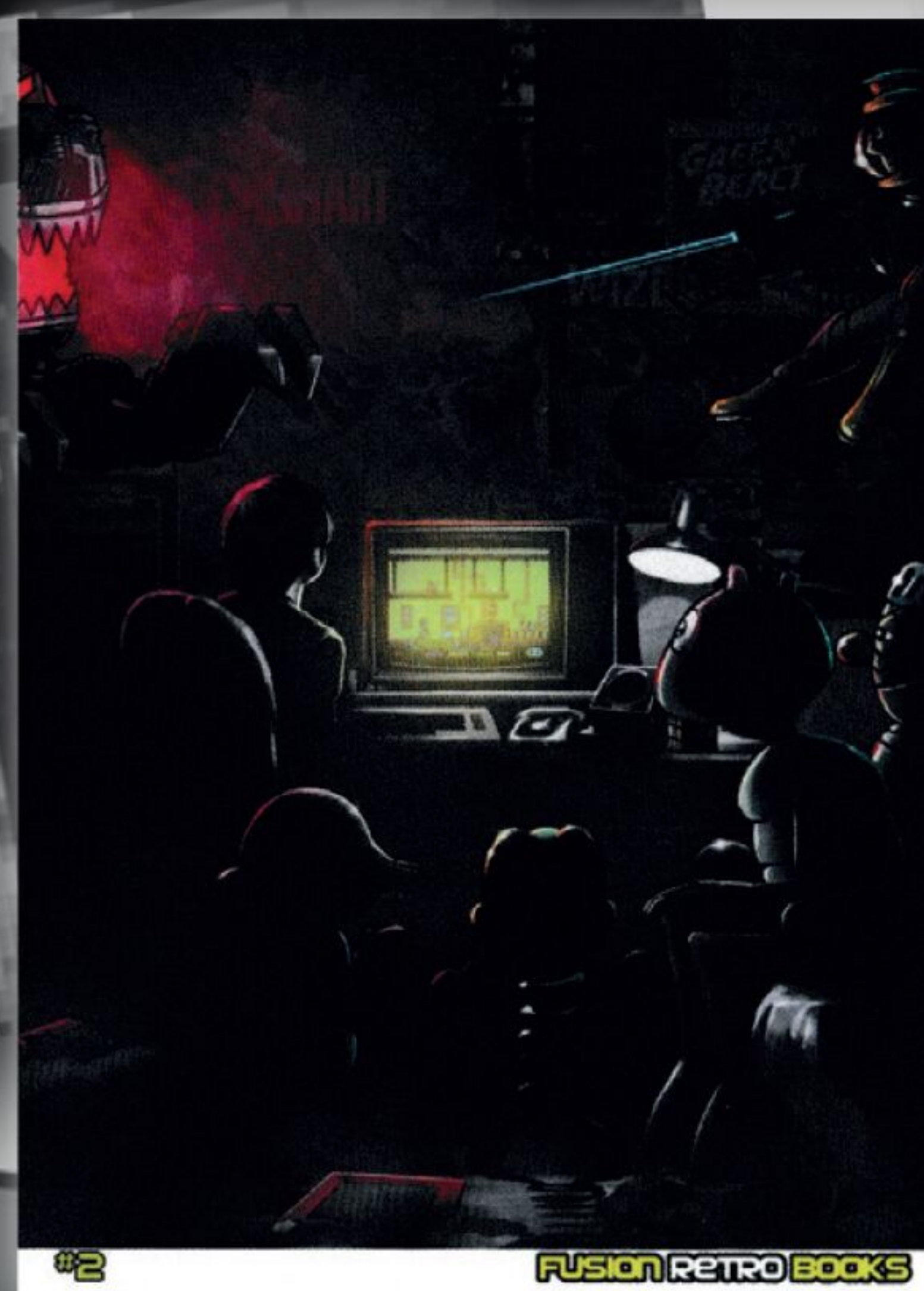
Long-time readers of our humble magazine will undoubtedly remember the matt-finish Player Cards packaged with the first 21 issues of FUSION. Almost all the cards featured the cover artwork of the accompanying issue and a corresponding number. When FUSION branched out with special issues focusing on one system or game series, Player Cards were included with the first six of those. The last four cards were included with the CRASH 2019 Annual, the FUSION 2020 Annual, and the FUSION 2021 Summer Special and Annual.

To complicate matters for all you avid “completionists” out there, the FUSION Dizzy Special issue has two different Player Cards, each with a different image. The one that featured the special issue cover artwork was only shipped with the magazine, but the alternative card was also sent to backers of the *Panic Dizzy* Kickstarter campaign. As if that discrepancy was not stressful enough, there are also two versions of the FUSION Amiga Special Player Card. While the artwork remains identical for both cards, a “glossy” version was included with the perfect-bound edition of the magazine.

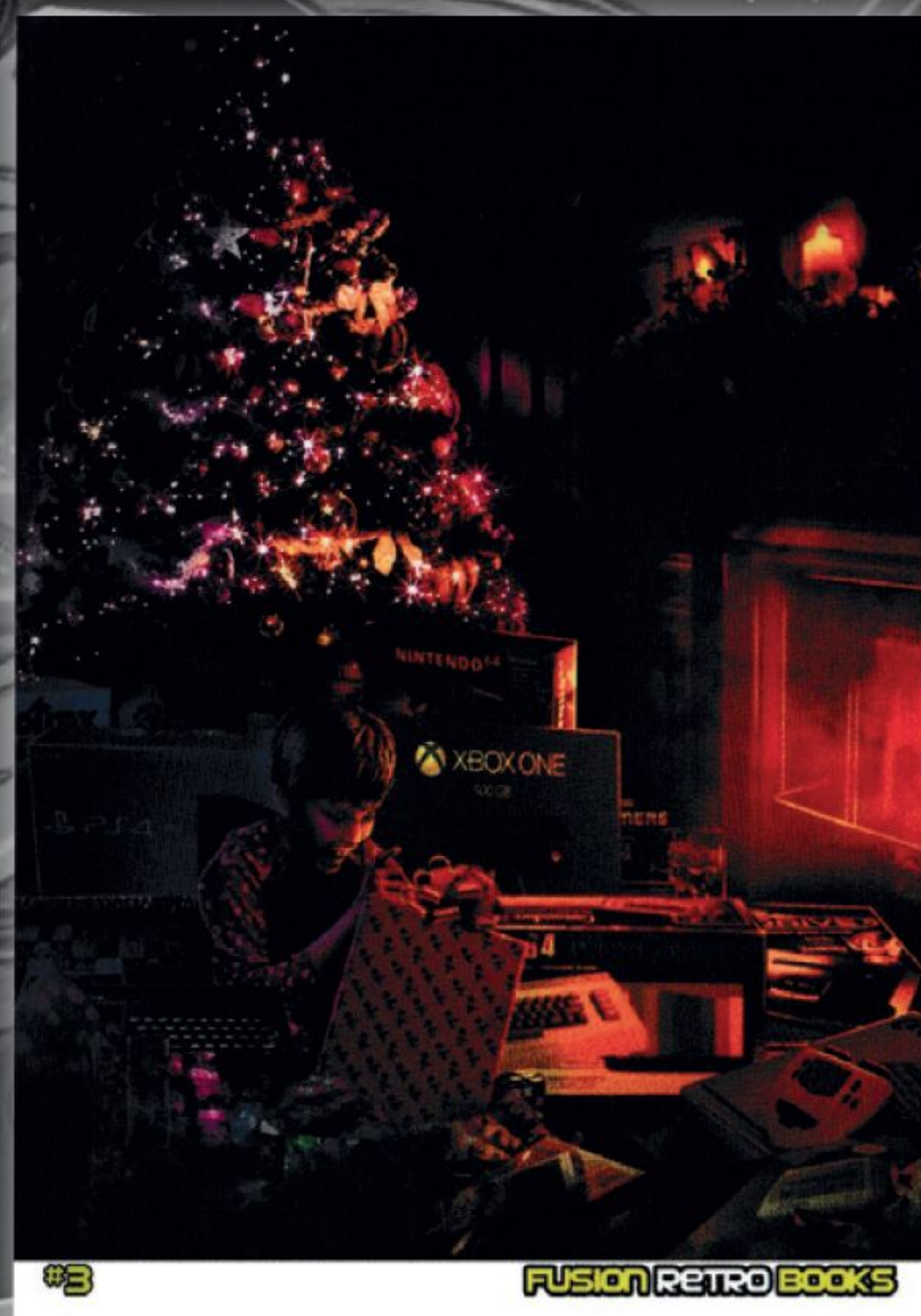
So, for this special fiftieth issue of FUSION, we thought it would be a good idea to bust open the myths and legends surrounding the Player Cards and provide you with a complete reference catalogue. We're (almost) certain that we've accounted for all 32 cards in existence, but honestly, nothing would surprise us at this point. ■



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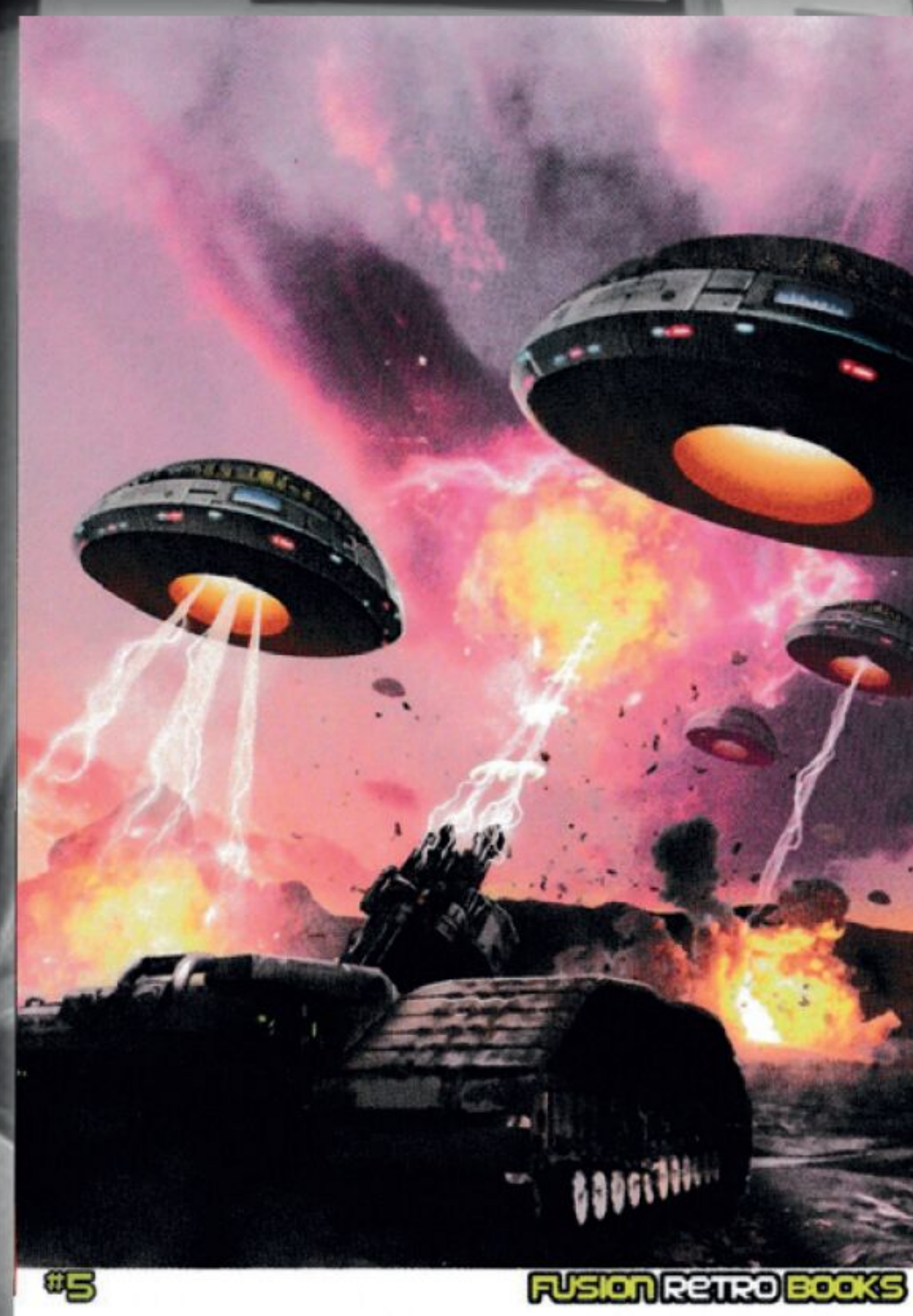
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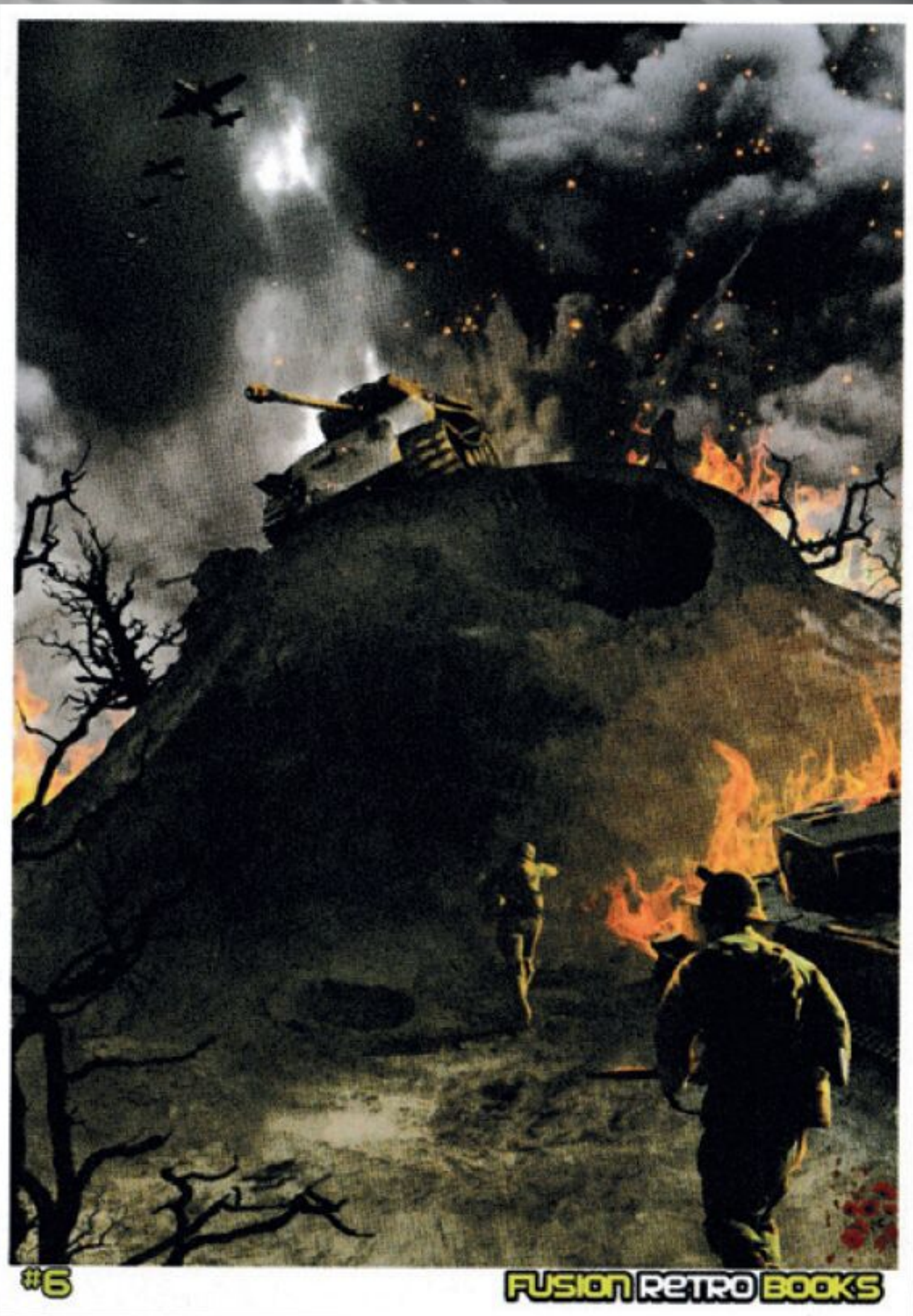
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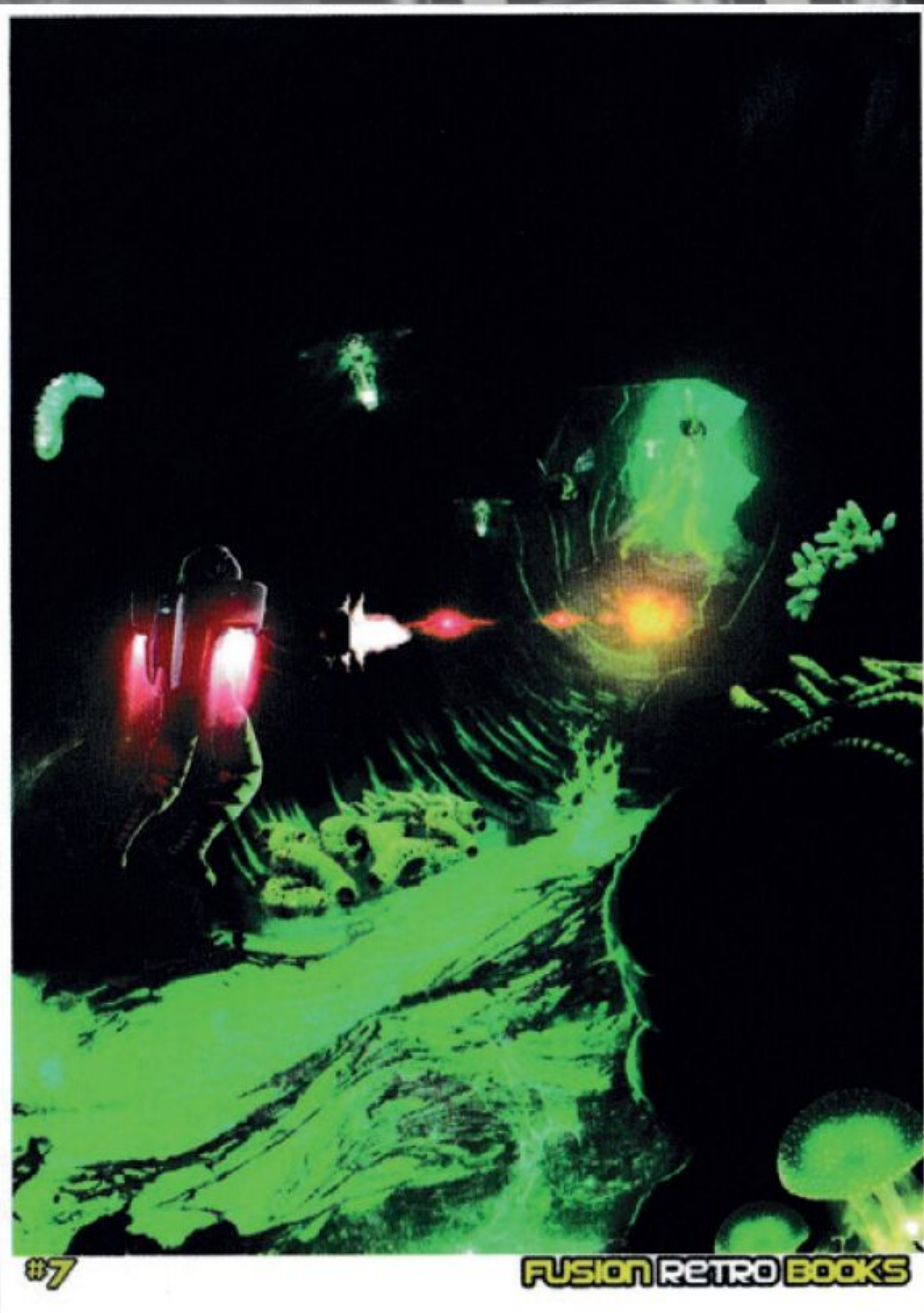
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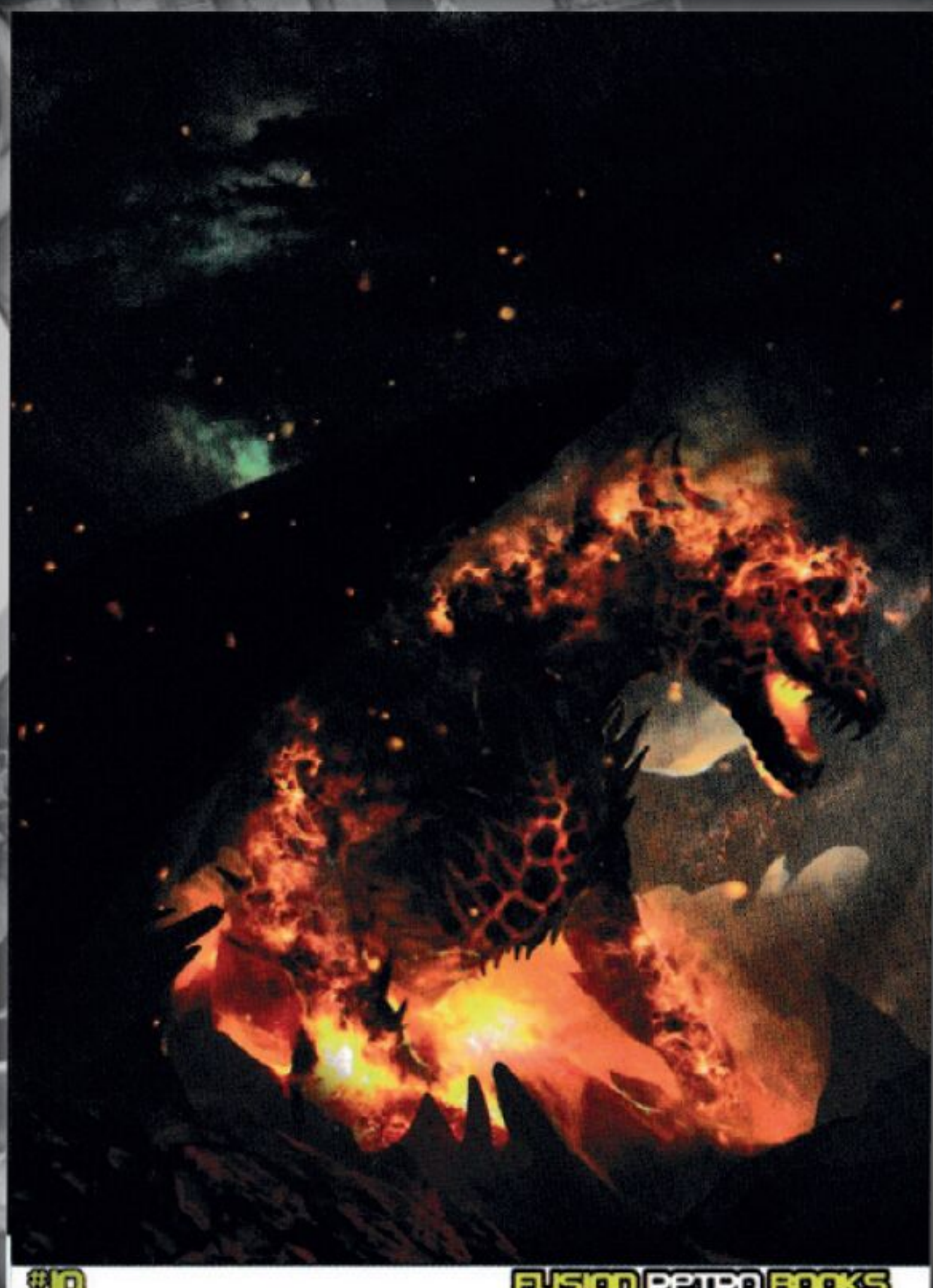
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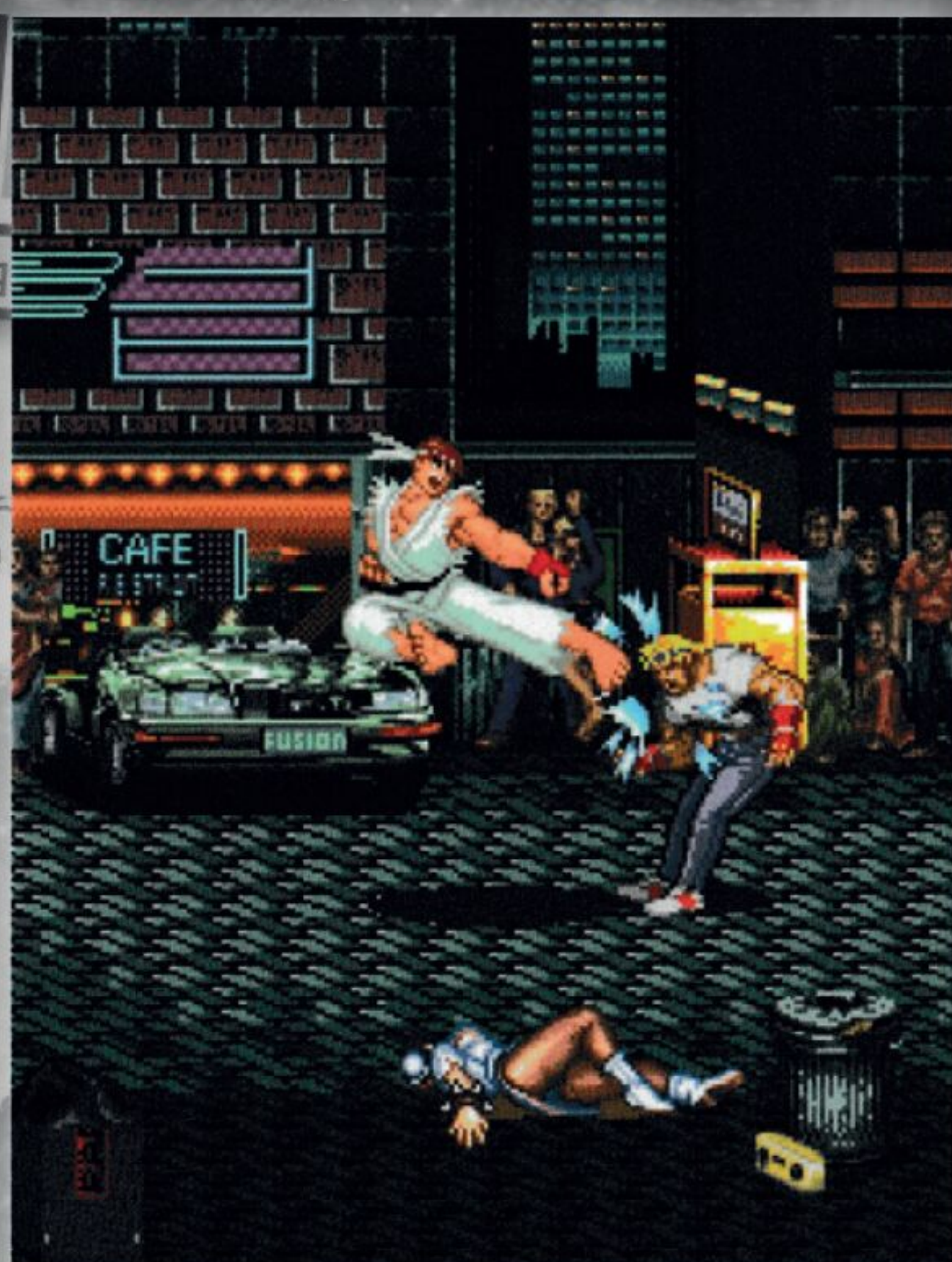
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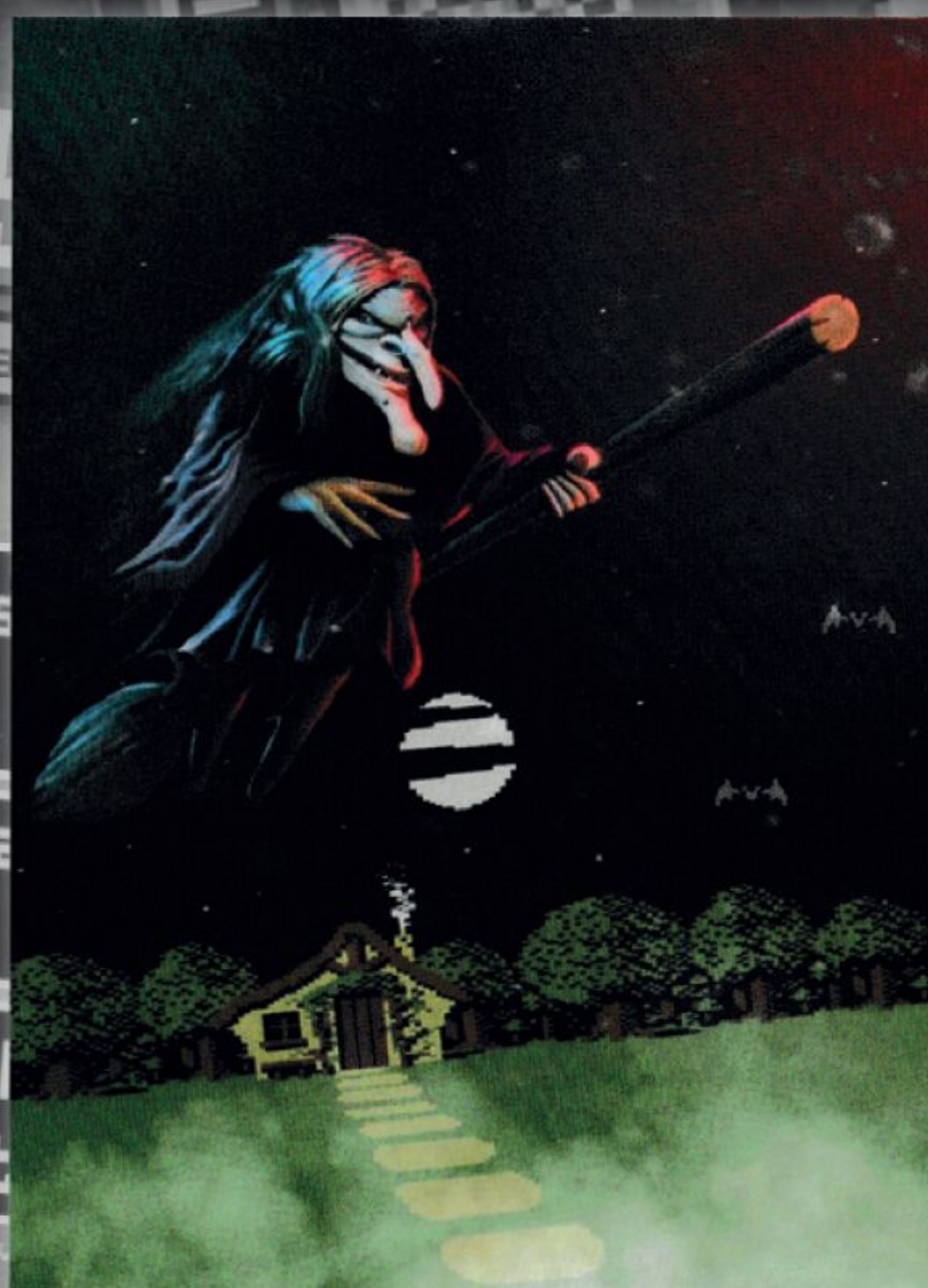
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FUSION RETRO BOOKS

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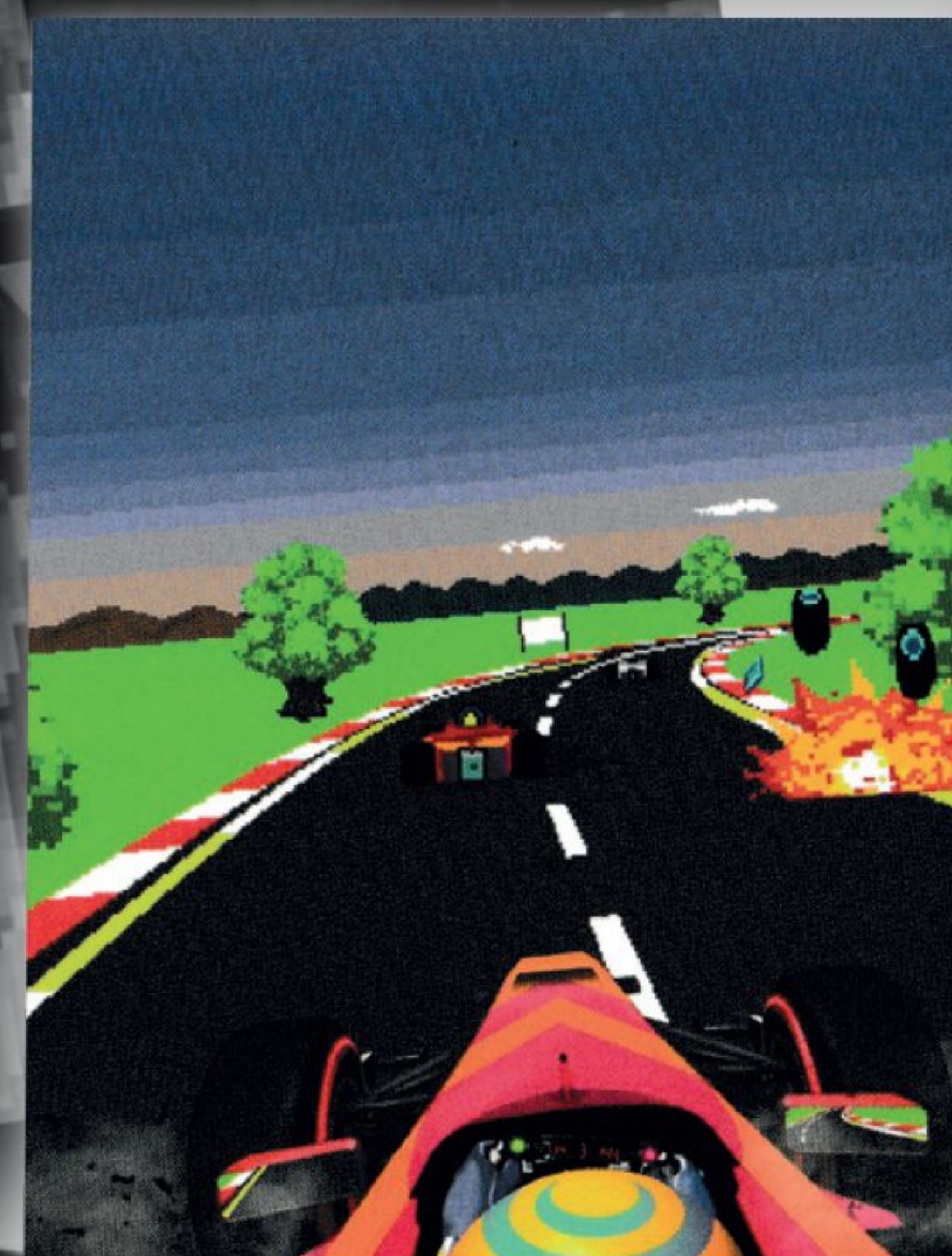
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FUSION RETRO BOOKS

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FUSION RETRO BOOKS

#20 FUSION ISSUE 20



#21

FUSION RETRO BOOKS

#21 FUSION ISSUE 21



FUSION ZX

FUSION RETRO BOOKS

FUSION ZX



FUSION 64

FUSION RETRO BOOKS

FUSION 64



FUSION CPC FUSION RETRO BOOKS

FUSION CPC



AMIGA FUSION RETRO BOOKS

FUSION AMIGA



RESIDENT EVIL FUSION RETRO BOOKS

FUSION RESIDENT EVIL



#DIZZY FUSION RETRO BOOKS

FUSION DIZZY (a)



DIZZY FUSION RETRO BOOKS

FUSION DIZZY (b)



CRASH 2019 ANNUAL FUSION RETRO BOOKS

CRASH ANNUAL 2019



ANNUAL 2020 FUSION RETRO BOOKS

FUSION ANNUAL 2020



#TOY ANNUAL 2021 FUSION RETRO BOOKS

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FUSION MUSICAL MARVELS

GEORGE STURGEON RETURNS TO THE HALLS OF DRACULA'S CASTLE AND TELLS US WHY 'VAMPIRE KILLER' FROM CASTLEVANIA: RONDO OF BLOOD IS A CLASSIC VIDEO GAME COMPOSITION.



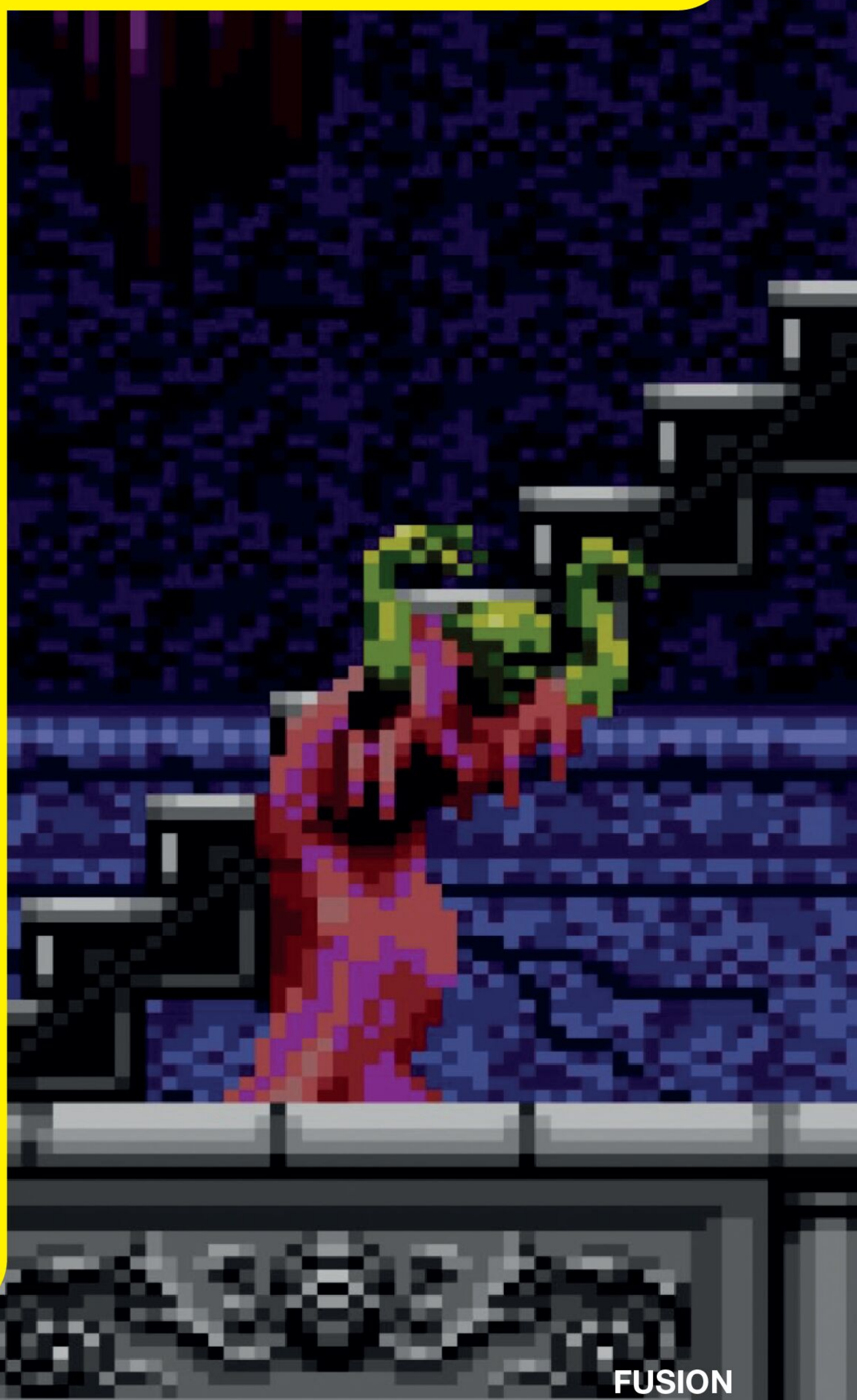
Musical Marvel: Vampire Killer
Game: Castlevania: Rondo of Blood
System: TurboGrafx-16 (PC Engine)
Composer: Metal Yuhki (Mikio Saito)
Year: 1993

Soundtrack Links:
<https://bit.ly/46Q4Plp>

SCAN ME!



■ Vampire Killer earns the title of Musical Marvel for its role in introducing the player to the gothic world of *Castlevania*. The moment our illustrious hero Simon Belmont entered the halls of Stage 1 in the original *Castlevania* in 1986, 'Vampire Killer' was there to welcome him. Although we didn't realise it then, a great musical legacy was about to begin. Over the following decades, this action-packed melody has become as synonymous with the series as the Belmont family themselves, largely maintaining the tradition of accompanying the player on their journey through the familiar castle hallways.





SOUND DESIGN

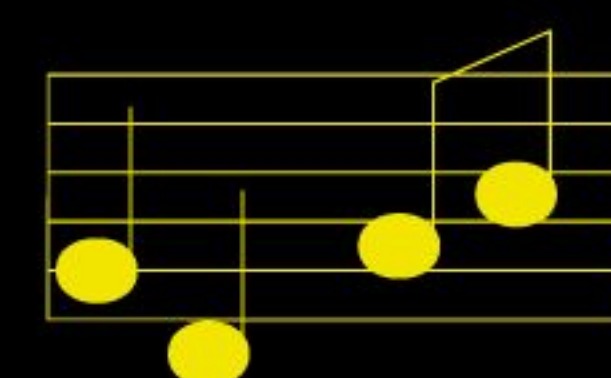


Vampire Killer is a simple music track on the surface, yet this simplicity is the track's greatest strength. Throughout the numerous iterations this iconic musical piece has had over the years, its signature melodic hook has remained intact from its 8-bit origins and effortlessly draws the player in from the moment it starts.

Haunting vocals kick off this version of 'Vampire Killer' from *Castlevania: Rondo of Blood* as Richter Belmont marches up to the drawbridge of Dracula's Castle, ready to kill the Count again. This ominous re-envisioning of the original track's opening moments is just one example of the welcome enhancements this CD-ROM version offers. As the vocals fade, the power-packed main melody hits the player's ears like the crack of a whip, and the energy of the original composition returns with even more impact and is an excellent example of technical progress.

With the series having been founded on its chiptune talents, the CD audio capabilities of the TurboGrafx-16 gave the soundtrack to *Rondo of Blood* a crisp quality previously unheard in the series. It adds numerous adjustments that stand out, such as vocals, new instruments, and sound effects. These factors are especially evident when comparing the 8-bit and CD-ROM versions to each other.

CONCLUSION



For those familiar with *Castlevania*, this track will, without question, evoke a mental image of the Castle Halls. Every player will have their favourite version, as it's appeared in countless titles across the series. 'Vampire Killer' is the musical equivalent of meeting an old friend. It was there from the very beginning to welcome the player. As the games have transitioned from one console to the next, its musical upgrades have only increased its status as the ultimate accompaniment to a monster-slaying adventure! ■

FROM PIXELS TO PRINT: CREATING



SUPER
STAGES

BADASS
BOSSSES

MUSICAL
MARVELS

George Sturgeon goes back to the drawing board.

Those who have been reading FUSION for the last few years will no doubt be familiar with some of the fantastic contributions that help to keep our magazine so diverse and wonderfully unpredictable. For Issue 50, Ben asked me to write about how I came up with the idea for some of the recurring FUSION series, such as Super Stages, Badass Bosses, and Musical Marvels. How did the concept for these articles come about?

I've always enjoyed watching or reading features on the Top 10 or Top 100 video games. However, they don't always explain why something makes it onto the list, other than 'It's a really fun level', or 'It has a great soundtrack', and so on. Using this premise, I decided that although having the opportunity to identify something unique or extraordinary was great, numbered lists are quite restrictive. I wanted to create a series where writers could take a deep dive into what makes particular aspects of a game so appealing to players. Although this was a concept I'd had for some time, the creative freedom of FUSION gave me the perfect medium to return to the idea and combine it with Ben's design flair to make it into something special.

Each series is designed to be a bite-sized celebration of the different components that make up a video game. When forming an article for the series, the mindset lies somewhere between that of a casual gamer and a developer. If I find a particular aspect of a game especially intriguing or unusual in some way, I zero in on the features that make it stand out and then decide if it would make a worthy article.



BADASS BOSSSES



Badass Bosses allows the writer to identify and showcase stand-out video game bosses that feature something unique or have left their mark on the player in some way. My criteria always begin with the quality of the battle mechanics and attack patterns. The difficulty level needs the right

balance (not too hard or too easy), or the player will lose interest, and I always have an eye on the weaponry choices. Next comes the Boss character design; something unique and innovative always catches the eye, but a strong personality is also a bonus. Developing the criteria for this series was a touch tricky at first, as we weren't sure whether the focus should be on the character design or the battle mechanics. We eventually landed somewhere between the two.

Case Study: Dr. Neo Cortex (Crash Twinsanity) Featured in FUSION #34



GEORGE STURGEON ATTENDS A PARTY TO CELEBRATE ANOTHER BADASS BOSS, BUT WITH DR. NEO CORTX AS THE HOST, WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

■ Dr Neo Cortex is a self-proclaimed evil scientist with a big head and an even bigger brain (supposedly). This egotistical human is unmistakable due to his yellow skin and the signature "N" in the centre of his forehead. Since his first appearance in 1996, Cortex has displayed a relentless obsession with world domination. Luckily for us, his creation and arch-nemesis Crash Bandicoot is always on hand to save the day.

As engineering and technology are Cortex's forte, he has a homemade arsenal at his disposal (although a hoverboard and ray gun seem to be his weapons of choice). As the saying goes, evil geniuses are harder to squash than cockroaches, and like the fleas in Crash's fur, this one keeps coming back.

In *Crash Twinsanity*, the battle against Cortex occurs in the level 'Jungle Bungle'. It takes place in an arena under the guise of a birthday party for Crash. In reality, however, it's the exact opposite, and Cortex's thoughtful gifts are set to blow your mind.

4



Dr Neo Cortex accepts his nomination for the Badass Boss award due to his sense of self-importance and superiority complex. With his unique looks and unusual comical presence, his love-hate personality makes him a truly memorable villain. Delivering line after line of persuasive rhetoric laced with sarcasm, his cartoonishly evil voice is identifiably iconic, even if his character is not onscreen. Voice actor Lex Lang's portrayal of Cortex as a maniacal narcissist is a masterpiece that perfectly fits Cortex's delightfully vainglorious personality.

During our research for this Badass Boss entry, we found that Cortex was born into a family of travelling circus performers. As part of the act, he had a large 'N' (standing for Nerd) tattooed onto his forehead. One thing's for sure, though, this guy never gives up on his relentless pursuit of world domination. Whilst not all of his inventions are as sturdy as others, failure only spurs Cortex on. This results in increasingly elaborate and outlandish methods to eradicate Crash, his most disappointing creation – after all, he is an evil scientist; what do you expect?

From a Boss Battle design perspective, the confrontation with Cortex occurs in a circular arena with a floor comprising several segments. This critical design feature comes into play as the battle unfolds. As combat commences, players

FUSION

5

It was a difficult choice between Cortex's boss battle from *Crash Bandicoot: Warped* and the one from *Crash Twinsanity*. However, in the end, what made the latter stand out was the attention to detail regarding the 'birthday party' scenario and how the voice work of actor Lex Lang was infused into every moment. On the surface, this one may seem like the standard Cortex battles we've seen before, but an in-depth look at Cortex's comical brand of evil was filled with so many quotable moments that everything flowed on the page. This article is one I often refer back to because the character's personality influenced how I wrote the article.

MUSICAL MARVELS



Musical Marvels was composed to spotlight stunning soundtracks that help to immerse the player into game environments or deserve mention for their ability to single-handedly represent the game itself. A great soundtrack can be easily overlooked but is crucial to providing the atmosphere and feeling to a video game - they wouldn't be quite the same without it. We recently added a QR code to Musical Marvels so readers can easily listen to what we're talking about. We refute the false claim that the QR code idea came about whilst reading a pizza menu (nom-nom).

Case Study: Magical Sound Shower (Out Run) Featured in FUSION #32

IN THE FIRST OF A NEW REGULAR FEATURE, GEORGE STURGEON BEGINS HIS SEARCH FOR MUSICAL MARVELS AS HE EXAMINES 'MAGICAL SOUND SHOWER' FROM THE SOUNDTRACK OF THE PIONEERING ARCADE DRIVING GAME OUT RUN

Picture the bustling arcades of the 1980s – nudging your fellow arcade-goers aside just to catch a glimpse of your favourite game being played, coins at the ready, and chomping at the bit for your turn to race (yes, they used to be that busy). Despite all of the chatting, laser sound effects, and explosions, above all that commotion, there was always one tune that stood out – for *Out Run*, that masterpiece was 'Magical Sound Shower'.

To this day, the cool factor of this game remains indisputable as players drive that red Ferrari at breakneck speed, girlfriend at their side to the rhythm of a tropical beat. *Out Run* is one of the most memorable 1980s arcade racers with a fantastic soundtrack. The fusion of Calypso and

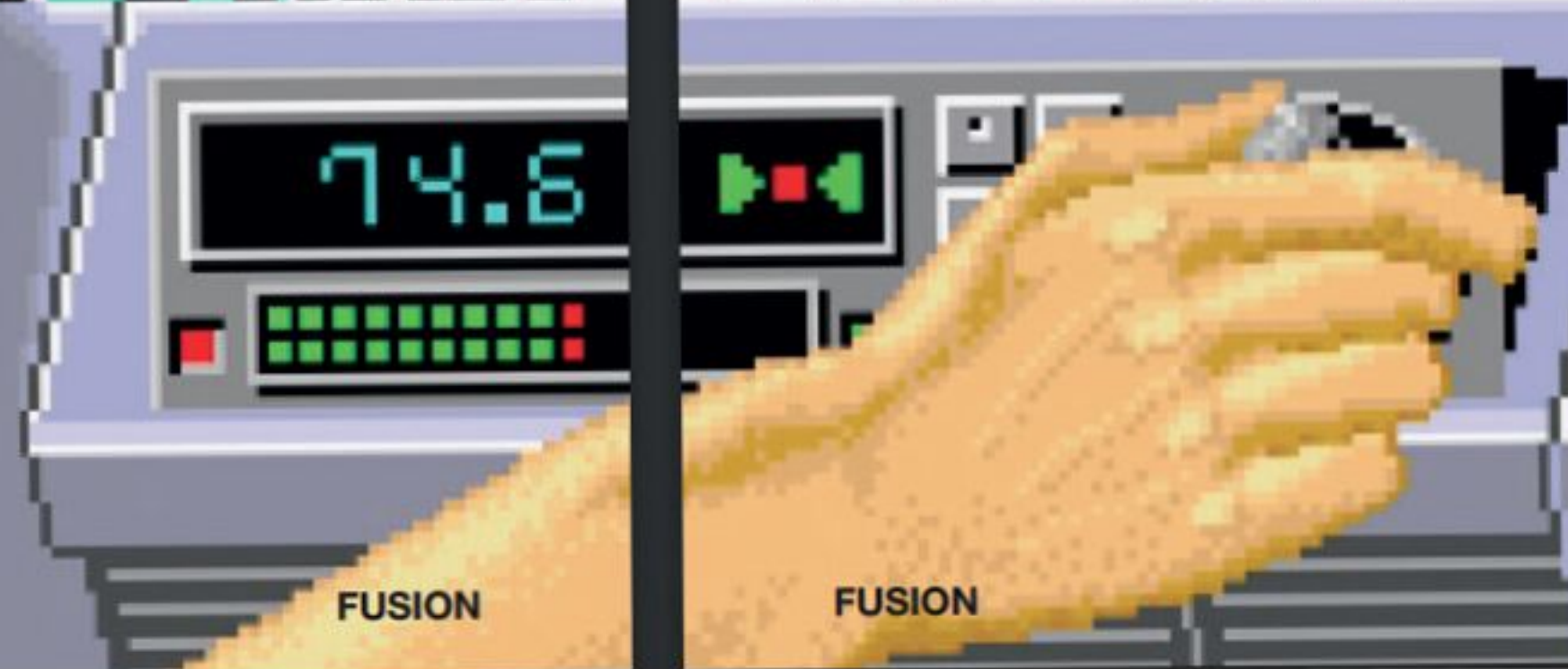
Samba beats make this tune, in particular, such a stand-out that it just had to be a Musical Marvel. Selectable Radio stations may be commonplace nowadays in games such as *Grand Theft Auto*, but in 1986 this was seen as a novel concept. *Out Run* first spawned the idea and gave players the option to have their driver flick between radio stations, selecting a tune to complement their journey through the game's five stages. Sega could have chosen the typical approach of 'different stage, different music track', but by incorporating this neat touch, they aimed to provide a bit of realism. It's a small detail, but it was an innovative gear shift at the time, and players weren't expecting it to be so much fun.

Whilst composer Hiroshi Kawaguchi created many other notable tunes for the

game, the steel drums and carnival vibes of 'Magical Sound Shower' are perfectly in tune with the tropical setting. Since its arcade debut, *Out Run* has seen many sequels on several consoles. As the hardware has improved, so has the sound quality with a few instrumental additions and enhancements. I have to admit, 'Camino a Mi Amor' comes in at a personal close second. Still, when I think of *Out Run*, the original 80s version of Magical Sound Shower immediately transports me to the first stage, 'Coconut Beach' and the view from behind that iconic Ferrari Testarossa Spider.

A nostalgic soundtrack that conjures up wonderful feelings of holidays, beaches, and bright red Italian sports cars. A Musical Marvel that has the ability to singlehandedly represent

SELECT MUSIC BY STEERING MAGICAL SOUND SHOWER

FUSION

MUSICAL MARVELS

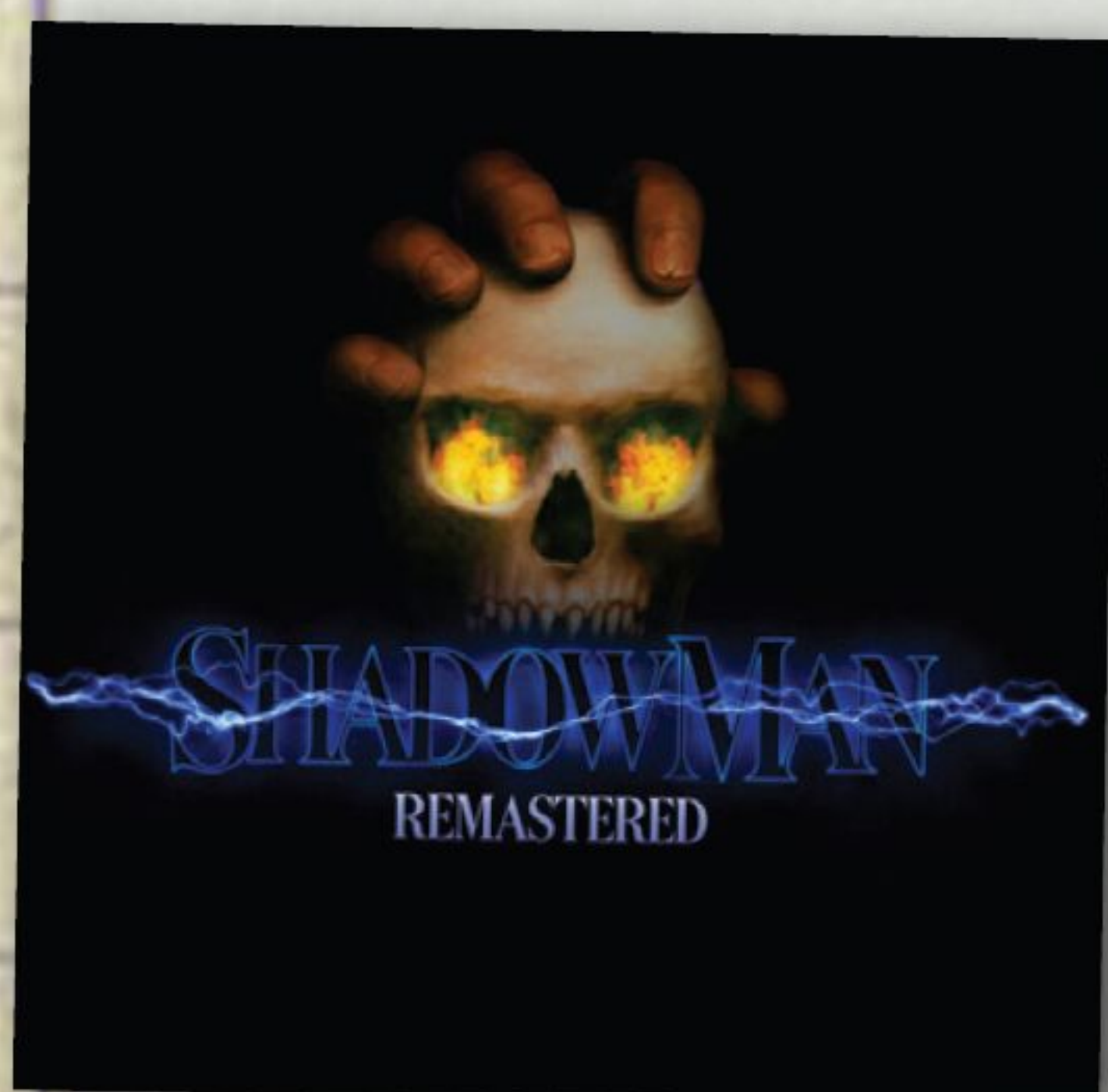


Musical Marvel: Magical Sound Shower
Game: Out Run
System: Arcade
Composer: Hiroshi Kawaguchi
Release Year: 1986



Soundtrack Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTDIKHfPmBk>

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FUSION
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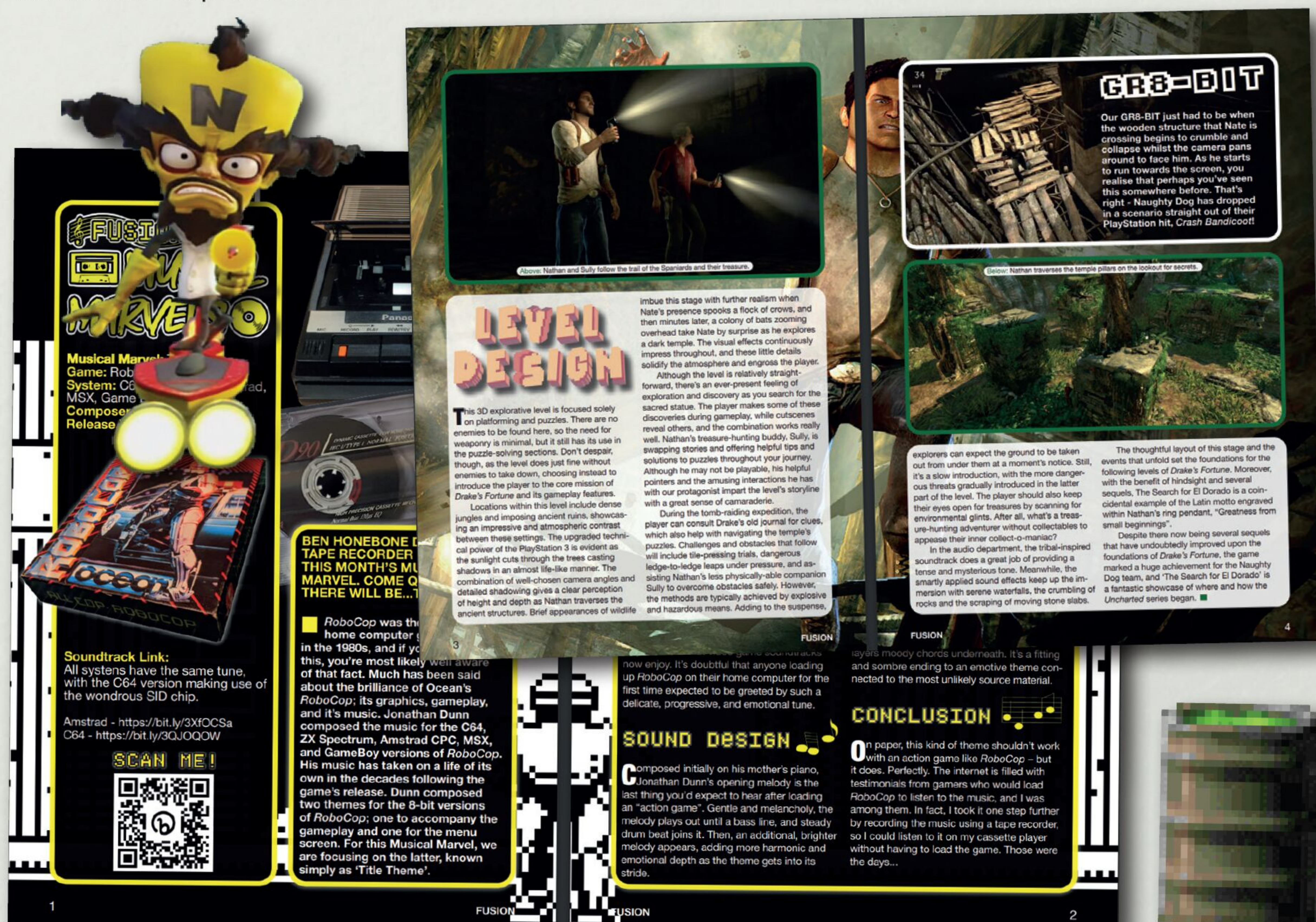


Magical Sound Shower from *OutRun* was our first Musical Marvel, and it's fair to say that it deserved the honour of headlining this third recurring series. From the moment this influential arcade composition hit the magazine's pages, we knew we had found what we were looking for and set the bar for all future Musical Marvels. With the ability to grab your attention from the other side of the Arcade, SEGA's chiptune wizards had produced a music track that resonates with the player, as all great video game music should.

It's Evolution Baby!

The look and feel of the articles have evolved over time. Alan designed the Super Stages logo for issue 23, and the look and feel of the features have been refined by Ben, with the addition of things like the 'GR8-BIT' boxout. The format for Badass Bosses has undergone a similar evolution.

Musical Marvels is the newest addition to the trinity, and Ben was more than happy to embrace it. By adding a link and QR code to the article, we hope that you, dear reader, might be listening to the Musical Marvel while we're talking about it. The idea is to provide a more interactive experience where we can.



To keep the articles consistent, we created a format for each, such as specific headings to extract what we need, a limited word count per section so we don't go on (and on), and a round-up to finish off. However, these parameters are not set in stone because we always leave room for creativity and improvement. All three types of articles include the difficult job of obtaining the correct screenshots. This task is particularly tricky because we usually require specific stills from key moments in a game, often from very old consoles. ■



toy-polloi



■ It was the late seventies, and the Toy Polloi family were heading away on their summer camping holiday to Suffolk. I'd broken up from school the week before, and my Mum and Dad would have spent the weekend getting the VW camper van packed up with the tent and all the supplies we needed for a week away in the Great British countryside. For me, that included a bag packed with some of my favourite toys and things that would keep me entertained while we were away.

Setting off early in the morning to avoid as much traffic as possible, my brother and I would sit in the back of the van listening to music or reading books while Dad drove and Mum knitted in the front. One of my clearest memories of these trips is when I sat in the back of the van looking out, not because of what was outside but because of the National Smurf sticker stuck on the window. I'm not sure how we got the sticker in the camper van. I imagine they were being given out for free, and my brother and I would have pestered to have one because, at the time, we were both crazy about The Smurfs. Going camping meant we would have to fill up with petrol a few times a week,

meaning if I had saved up enough pocket money, I could get a new Smurf. And I loved those little blue guys.

At the time, National Petrol Stations had a promotional campaign featuring the Smurfs. National Benzole started the 'Service with a Smurf' campaign in 1978 with adverts on Radio and TV, combined with toys available at most petrol stations. It was a great way to encourage more people to buy their petrol as there is nothing quite as effective as children's pester power in the back of the car to make you stop somewhere. It certainly worked for my brother and me.





Every time you filled up with petrol, you got a token which if you collected enough of, you could get a new Smurf figure for 36p. The excitement of going into the petrol station with Dad and choosing one of the Smurfs on display still lives in me now. I can even remember the smell of the Smurfs, plastic with a hint of car oil from the petrol attendant's hands.

SMURF HISTORY

The Smurfs were created in 1958 by a Belgian cartoonist, Pierre Culliford, or "Peyo" as he was known. According to Peyo, the name Smurf is a Dutch translation of the French "schtroumpf", a word he invented during a meal when he couldn't remember the word salt.

They live in a magical, hidden forest village that mirrors a utopian society, harmoniously coexisting with nature. The wise and paternalistic Papa Smurf leads their society. Standing three apples high, these little blue characters have a distinctive look, wearing white trousers and a Phrygian cap. Although they all looked the same, they each had their own personalities. By looking at the accessories a Smurf was carrying, you could work out who they were: Spy Smurf wore a cape and eye mask, Ice hockey Smurf is

kitted out in hockey gear with a stick and puck, and plumber Smurf has a wrench and toolbox. I think you get the idea.

BURIED FOR 40 YEARS?

I featured a restoration of a vintage Astro Smurf figure on my YouTube channel a few months back. This figure is usually found missing his space helmet, and I was able to make a replacement using a Christmas bauble, which provided an excellent result. Soon after that video went live, an ecologist called Alex contacted me. He'd found the very same figure in the mud while working in a field near Bognor Regis and sent it to me. This Astro Smurf had obviously been there for a long time and looked like it had been ploughed over more than once!

Alex thought it would be fun for me to restore him, but I was so taken with the story and how he looked that I gave him a matching smashed-up space helmet and put him on display next to my figure. It interests me that this figure had been buried in the ground for a long time. We will never know how he got there, but his survival makes him unique.





National for Service with a **SMURF**



Smurfs toys were produced by a company called Dupuis in 1959, but it wasn't until the National Petrol campaign that they really took off. By that time, the German toy company Schleich was in charge of production and still is today. Their simple design, cute pocket size, and low price meant that the figures were a big hit with kids and are still highly sought after and collected today. Each year, 8 to 12 new Smurfs are added to the toy line, with a staggering 300 million sold so far.

Despite their popularity, it wasn't until 1981 that the Smurfs first appeared on TV with a cartoon series produced by Hanna-Barbera Productions that ran for nine seasons over 258 episodes. Each week, the carefree Smurfs, led by Papa Smurf, would have to deal with some scheme concocted by Gargamel and his cat Azrael that usually involved trying to eat them or gain their magical secrets. It doesn't sound very child-friendly when describing it, but The Smurfs was a fun show to watch. ■



www.youtube.com/toypolloi
[@toy_polloi](https://twitter.com/toy_polloi)
www.facebook.com/ToyPolloi
[@toypolloi](https://www.instagram.com/toypolloi)
www.toypolloi.com

PAINT DOTS AND LEAD

If you look at a Smurf's foot, you will notice a small dot of paint. It's usually yellow if you are in the UK, but they do appear in other colours. Why are they there? The answer is simple; it denotes where the figure was painted. A red dot means they were painted in Sri Lanka, and a yellow dot indicates they were painted in Portugal.

The paint dots were added because of an incident in 1978 when National Benzole's Smurf campaign took off, and they couldn't keep up with demand. New factories were required to increase production and reduce costs, and Hong Kong was chosen to manufacture the figures for the ongoing promotion. Production costs were reduced, and all seemed well until it turned out that the paint used in the Hong Kong factories didn't meet British safety standards as its lead content was too high. The 'scandal' hit the news, and the Smurf promotion was suspended until the problem could be rectified. Until 2005, all Smurfs featured a coloured dot to indicate where they were painted.



LET'S TALK RETRO



GAMES FLASHBACK

PlayStation 2 Chart

COLIN AND JAMES FROM LET'S TALK RETRO RETURN FROM ANOTHER CLOSE SHAVE WITH THE TEMPORAL POLICE IN MARCH 2006, WHERE THEY STUDIED THE PLAYSTATION 2 CHARTS.

Colin:

It's Chico Time! Yes, for this Games Chart Flashback, we're taking you back to when X-Factor contestant Chico was topping the UK singles chart. Nintendo surprised us all with the Nintendo DS Lite going on sale in Japan, and if you popped down to your local cinema, you might have watched Steve Martin in *The Pink Panther*. Give yourself a pat on the back if you've worked out from those clues that we're going back to March of 2006. We've decided to check out the games topping the PlayStation 2 chart, and at number five, James, we find the latest version of a one-time *FIFA* challenger.

James:

Not just five in name, but also in chart position, we have *Pro Evolution Soccer V*. Also known as "the last good PEZ title". Let's list a few major things Konami scored with:

Graphics? Tick. Online Multiplayer (although far better on the Xbox)? Tick. And cracking gameplay? Tick. Although it was released in Oct 2005, it sold well over 600K copies in the UK and boatloads, especially in France, where it was the biggest-selling game of 2005. Maybe having a French player on the cover art helped. Most will know the series was named *Winning Eleven* in Japan, and if you didn't, you do now.

Colin:

Right, if you will excuse me, James, I'm going to buzz in because, at number four, we have *Buzz! The Music Quiz*, the first of the *Buzz!* trivia quiz games to be released for the PS2 and a PlayStation exclusive here in Europe. The music quiz for up to four players takes place in a fictional TV studio with the questions being asked by the game's main character and host, Buzz (what else would he be called?), with the help of his assistant, Rose. To make the game more interactive, it shipped with four *Buzz!* controllers, which players use to buzz in when they know the answer to a question. The game included 5,000 questions with 1,000 synthesized music clips. Questions ranged from naming the performer, the song title, the year of release, or a more in-depth question about the performers themselves. I'm



GAMES CHART FLASHBACK

March 2006



Above: “Can I play with madness? The prophet stared at his crystal ball”, host Buzz’s headbanging skills are on fleek.

sure that the *Buzz!* quiz games didn’t appeal to all gamers, but I have to admit that spending an evening with friends or family sat around the TV competing to be the first to buzz in and answer a question is one of my past gaming guilty pleasures. Now that I’ve confessed that, I think I will buzz off!

James:

At number 3, a game based on the book *Narnia: The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe*. This is possibly the only game that features “Wardrobe” in the title. Could this game being in the charts be proof the charts were rigged (There, I said it)? If you like FMV morphing into gameplay, you will enjoy this. It’s not my bag; you just wander around punching furniture, collecting coins, and occasionally changing between the children’s characters. The

graphics are good, though, and the voice acting is okay - one for younger minds.

Colin:

Next up in this chart, we have *Peter Jackson’s King Kong*. As you may remember, this game is a tie-in to the 2005 *King Kong* movie that starred Jack Black and Naomi Watts. The game was, in fact, a collaboration between the film’s director, Peter Jackson, and the game’s director, Michel Ancel. Much like the movie, the game’s plot follows a New York scriptwriter named Jack Driscoll, who finds himself attempting to save the plot’s love interest, Ann Darrow, whom the natives of Skull Island plan to sacrifice to the giant gorilla, Kong. The most





Above: Suspiciously in at number 3, *Namia: Bla! Bla! Bla!*.



Above: That's everyone's face after watching King Kong.



Input the following directions at the game's title screen:

Unlock all cars: **R1, Circle, Circle, Circle, R1, R2, L2, L1, Up, Down, L1, L1, L1**

Get a 4,999,999 Bounty: **L1, R1, X, X, X, Up, Down, Up, Down**

Transmission, engine, tires, and body kits room: **R1, L1, L2, R2, Up, Down, Down, Up, X, X**

interesting thing about the game is that you play as both Driscoll and Kong, with the Driscoll sections being played in a first-person view, while the Kong sections take on a third-person perspective. On release, the game received critical acclaim for its immersive environments, audio, and voice acting, especially the parts provided by Black and Watts. Some even went as far as to describe it as one of the best movie-based video games ever. Although I remember playing this back in the day, I can't remember much about it or playing it for long. So, with it getting such high praise, I may need to go back and take another look at it.

James:

At number one, it's *Need for Speed: Most Wanted*. Believe it or not, EA never used to be rubbish (and all about milking your wallet with microtransactions); this was the King of Street Racing Games. It was developed by Black Box Games in Canada, a company that consisted of former employees of Radical Entertainment who

had racing game hits with *Crash Team Racing* and *Simpsons Road Rage*. Eventually, they were hoovered up by EA and renamed EA Black Box, and then in 2013, EA shut the studio down. Playing *Most Wanted*, you can tell that the developers understood what made a great racer. Many a childhood would have been spent playing this, and it would have been far from wasted. Check it out if you fancy some story-based nitro-powered street racing action with a banging soundtrack.

Colin:

So, there we have it, the PlayStation 2 chart of March 2006 and one with something for everyone. James says many a childhood would have been spent playing *Need for Speed: Most Wanted*, but I must admit I was into my 40s by 2006, and I remember playing it for many an evening. Anyway, it's time for us to love and leave you, but before we go, here are some cheat codes for *Need for Speed: Most Wanted*, just in case we've made you feel like booting it up and hitting the road. ■



Spectrum
Heaven!

CRASH

Bash RETURNS

IN COLLABORATION
WITH



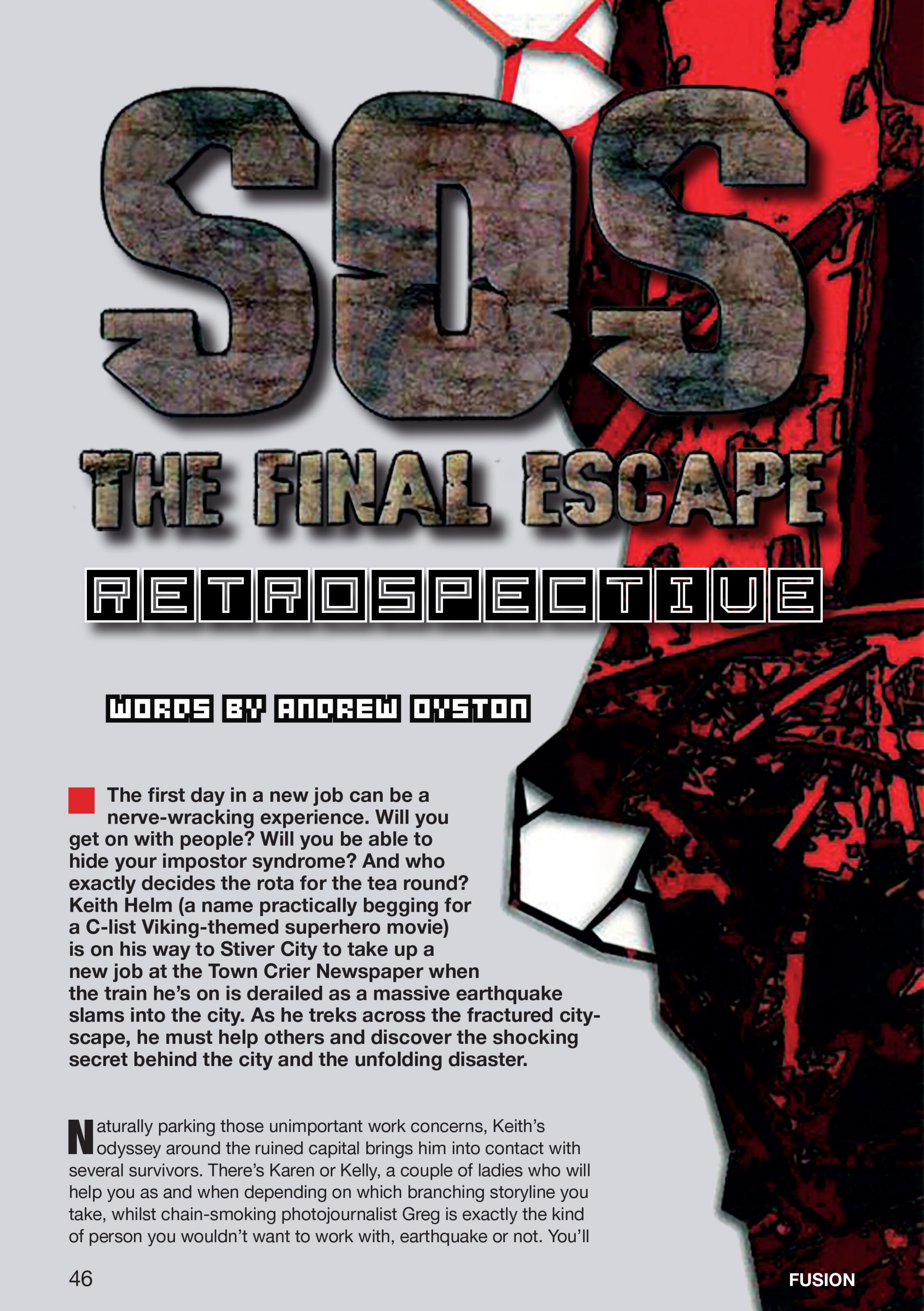
www.retrocomputermuseum.co.uk



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SIGS

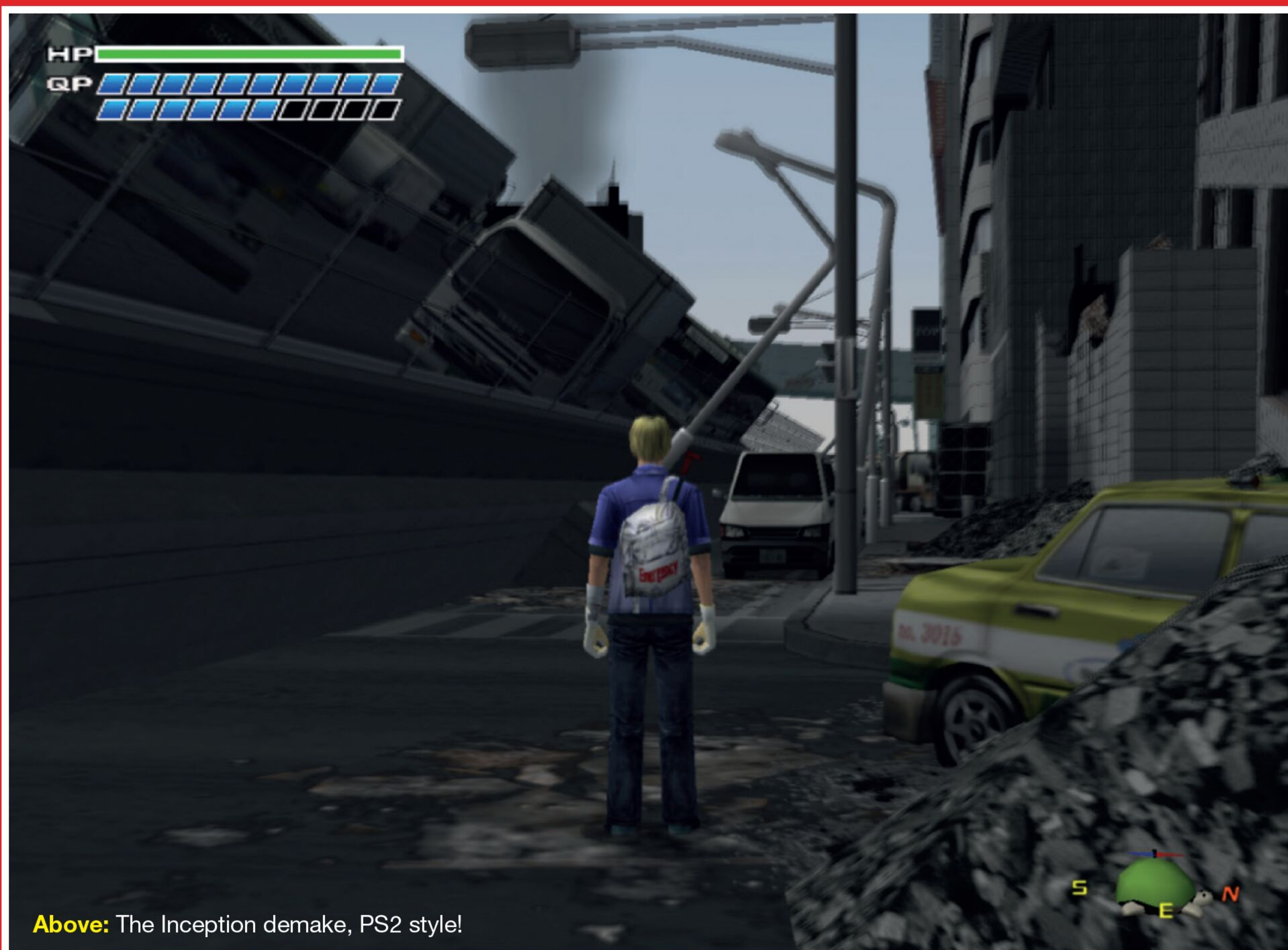
THE FINAL ESCAPE

RETROSPECTIVE

WORDS BY ANDREW OYSTON

■ The first day in a new job can be a nerve-wracking experience. Will you get on with people? Will you be able to hide your impostor syndrome? And who exactly decides the rota for the tea round? Keith Helm (a name practically begging for a C-list Viking-themed superhero movie) is on his way to Stiver City to take up a new job at the Town Crier Newspaper when the train he's on is derailed as a massive earthquake slams into the city. As he treks across the fractured cityscape, he must help others and discover the shocking secret behind the city and the unfolding disaster.

Naturally parking those unimportant work concerns, Keith's odyssey around the ruined capital brings him into contact with several survivors. There's Karen or Kelly, a couple of ladies who will help you as and when depending on which branching storyline you take, whilst chain-smoking photojournalist Greg is exactly the kind of person you wouldn't want to work with, earthquake or not. You'll



Above: The Inception demake, PS2 style!

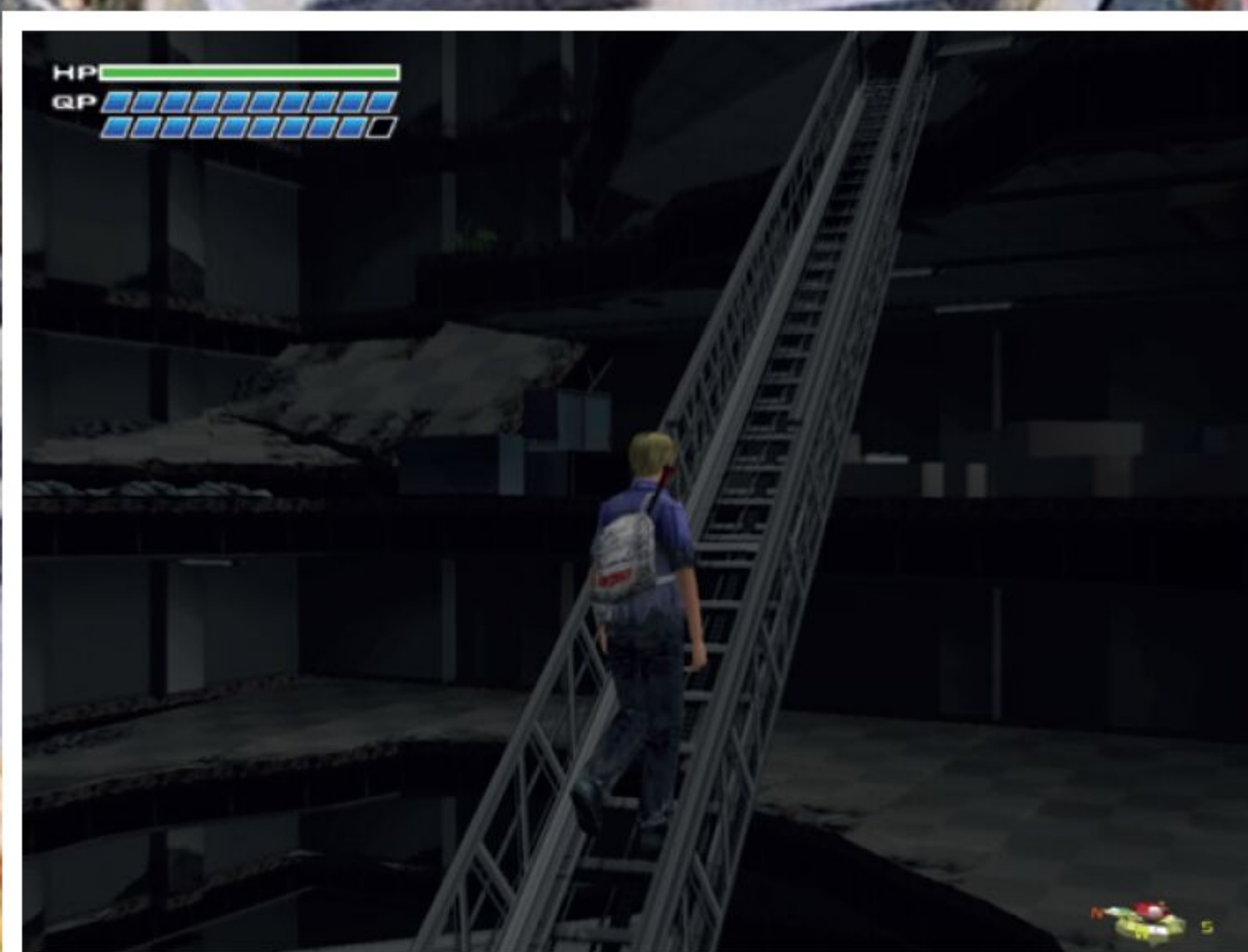
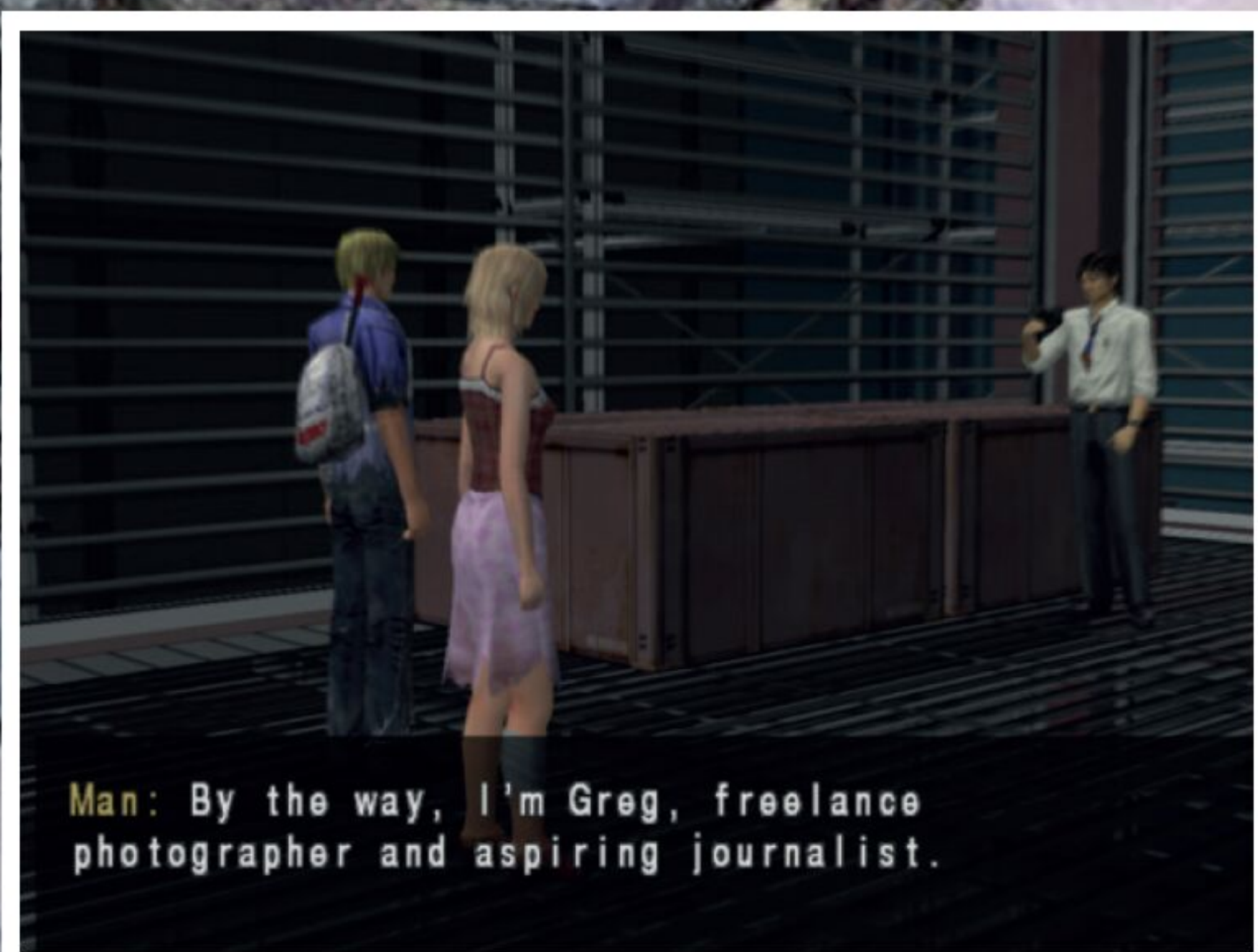


also get to meet the narcissistic chief planner of the city, Terry Stiver - he did name the city after himself, after all. Other characters pop in and out as the tale progresses, but at times, these are the merest of cameos - the elderly couple in one tower would barely warrant Equity cards if this were a TV show.

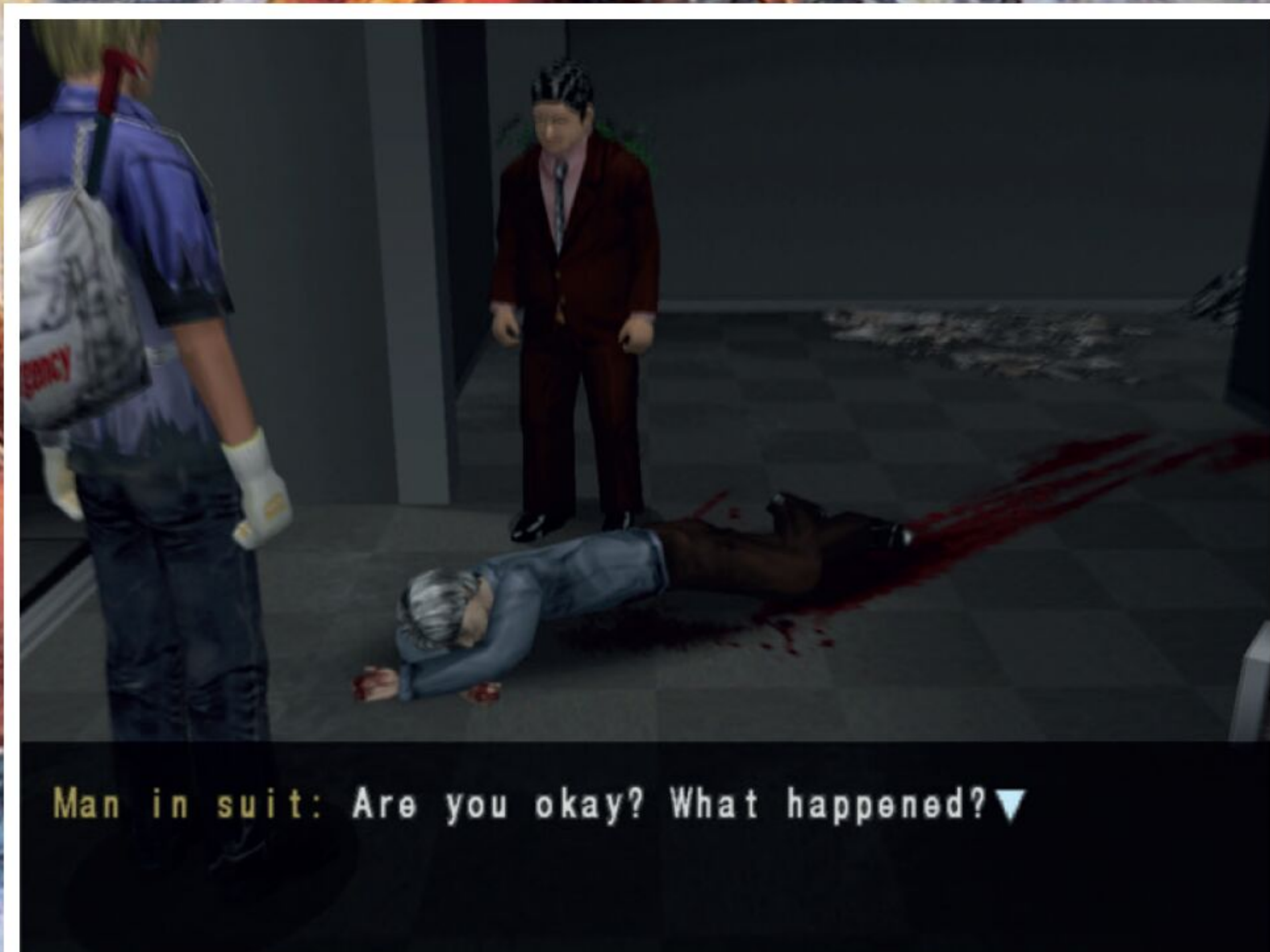
The most significant character in the game is the actual city, the story of which is told through letters and audio clips that litter the streets and buildings. Combine these with the in-game cutscenes, and a picture is built up of a construction project with a dark secret, one that some will kill to keep hidden. There are other collectables; a light-hearted compass collect-a-thon puts over thirty direction-denoting devices out there for you to find for whatever reason.

Indeed, it is the story of the disaster that befalls Stiver City that the game really wants you to care about. There are several endings to discover, and (no spoilers) may I suggest doing something cheerful after playing this game, as some of the conclusions are pretty dark. That said, getting those endings requires specific actions and choices throughout the game that are not exactly telegraphed, so consulting a guide is essential to experience them all.

SOS The Final Escape is a pretty early PS2 title, and it shows. The graphics are “classic” for the period: roughly animated characters set in a grey, washed-out, blocky



Clockwise from top left: **Greg** - A full-time selfish idiot! **Nice Stairway** - Wayne and Garth would not be denied this time. **Murder** - You don't have to be Jessica Fletcher to figure this one out. **IT Disaster Recovery** - I hope there's a backup on here.



environment. I shouldn't be too cruel - the portrayal of a shattered city is compelling and a step up from anything the original PlayStation could handle. Sound design is similarly basic. There are definite trigger points for environmental effects - switching the rain on and off as effectively as they did in *The Truman Show*. Music is limited to the credits, but the voice acting draws the most attention. Some characters are phoned in, lifeless and dull, while others approach pantomime levels of scenery chewing. Albert is probably the main culprit, and it's a shame they didn't animate the character twirling his moustache just for effect. The rescue worker telling off the survivors like an irate train conductor on the 2:25 from Chelmsford is simply sublime.

There are other issues, too. The tank controls are unresponsive and unwieldy, leading to almost certain death in situations where delicacy is paramount. You can reset the camera to sit behind you most of the time, but fixed angles still add unnecessarily to the challenge. Inventory management isn't too bad, and on the Normal difficulty, you'll have few issues with your ever-decreasing thirst gauge. It's a "good thing", as

the game only permits saving at water sources and occasionally at set points in the story. When you need to quench your thirst - fill up a water bottle and save the game. However, each act takes a separate press of the action button and a visit to the subsequent menu - it's a pain and soon becomes laborious. The Hard difficulty, however, does live up to its name and is recommended only for masochists and hardcore fans. With either setting, you'll still suffer from random health drops as you get taken out by a falling scenery you didn't know was coming.

There are many things to fault *SOS The Final Escape* for, and time has definitely not been kind to it, yet it retains a place in my heart. It was one of the first PS2 games I bought, and my recent playthrough merely confirms its right to be there. It's janky, unpolished, and, at times, distinctly Japanese, yet it remains a challenging but fun way to spend a couple of afternoons. There were sequels, none of which reached the UK, which is a shame, but this first entry in what became the *Disaster Report* series has a certain appeal. It only leaves one unanswered question: Who decided the tea rota? ■

CHRIS'

FUSION RETRO BOOKS

COFFEE BREAK

FUSION 50



It seems like yesterday when a few of us were thinking about doing a magazine. The original idea was to produce a regular podcast about retro gaming – we even bought all the kit. It soon became apparent that we had no idea how to make a single recording that would be remotely interesting. It all felt like too much work for very little reward. Having produced a magazine before called Retro Fusion, it seemed appropriate (and much more familiar) to create a new printed publication.

The first challenge was naming the new magazine! Well, I suggested we drop the Retro and just call it FUSION – a fusion of all things gaming, including toys, board games, retro gaming, modern gaming, etc. That was the theory, anyway. We started by producing a few pages using a simple template in Adobe InDesign. Wil Overton created the cover we used for a separate project – he had no problem with us re-using the Cybernoid-themed art again for our launch issue of FUSION, so we added that to the test pages. We sent the file off to a printer and paid a fortune for a couple of copies. When they came back, they were perfect – and that was the start of FUSION magazine over five and a half years ago.

We were a small team back then. We proofed those early 60-page copies ourselves and used Trevor Storey to produce our covers – he has done each one from issue 2 onwards. The first 21 issues of the magazine came with a 'playing' card – I believe these have become quite the collectable for some now. If I am honest, they were a pain to produce and were always forgotten

until the last moment. Many an issue was late due to waiting for the card to come back from the printers. A few imperfections came into play with the re-prints of some of the cards, and these will be like those Star Wars figures that now exchange hands for thousands of pounds on auction sites in about thirty years – I suspect not!

The idea then came to produce FUSION Specials, so a good number of 52-page Specials have been produced over the years. The idea of a Special was to concentrate on one theme – maybe an 8-bit computer like the Spectrum or a game series such as Final Fantasy. We made FUSION magazine and FUSION Special binders available that could hold up to twelve issues of the magazine. We have produced five 120-page hardback annuals in total, each with all new articles and reviews. And here we are, amazingly, at issue 50 with Ben, who has been editing and formatting the magazine since issue 37. I handed the reigns of FUSION over to Alan from issue 29 so I could concentrate on other Fusion Retro Books projects before the torch was passed to Ben, who has done a brilliant job with the magazine ever since. He sure does have more artistic flair than I ever will.

What about the future, I hear you ask? Well, FUSION magazine is going strong in print form each month. It sells over 1000 Annuals each year and is our most popular magazine on Readly. So, we keep on going whilst you guys keep on reading. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our loyal readers – especially those who subscribe to FUSION on Patreon. Without you, we would never have hit the 50-issue milestone of our magazine. Thank you.

Chris Welkows

THE FUSION TEAM'S TOP 20 GAMES OF ALL TIME (SORT OF)

BEN TASKS THE FUSION TEAM WITH CHOOSING THEIR TOP 20 GAMES BECAUSE A TOP 50 WOULD HAVE BEEN FAR TOO LONG AND COMPLICATED.

■ Choosing your favourite video games “of all time” is tough, and for many people, the list will fluctuate depending on mood and memory. Nevertheless, I get a kick out of making people sweat over lists, and I wanted to put the team through the same pain that I experienced when making my Top 20. I still feel like I’ve abandoned the happy memories of playing *Eternal Darkness: Sanity’s Requiem* on the GameCube, but what can you do? There isn’t enough room in the Ark for all the animals.

The team’s data has yielded some interesting results. My hopes of compiling a definitive list have been somewhat dashed by the diverse array of games that we all cherish. But thankfully, there are enough commonalities there to make a list (of sorts) that represents 20 games, in no particular order, that mean a lot to us. No more than three team members listed the same game in their Top 20, and this only occurred five times, so the Top 5 games reflect the most popular choices among us. Fifteen games were voted for twice, giving us our definitive-ish Top 20 list. This diversity means that many classic games didn’t make the cut, so I’ve included all our individual Top 20s at the end of the article – just in case you’re curious!

We hope you enjoy this ‘list-fest’, and please feel free to share your Top 20s with us via the FUSION Discord or Facebook Group.





SUPER MARIO WORLD (1990)

3 Votes (Andrew Fisher, Paul Twist, Faith Johnson)

It's a-him! In his 16-bit debut! We're not exactly digging deep here, but some games become well-known classics for good reason. In *Super Mario World*, the eye-popping Mode 7 graphics combine with fiendishly clever level design and the introduction of Yoshi to create a perfect 2D platforming experience.

DOOM (1993)

3 Votes (Andrew Osyton, Paul Twist, George Sturgeon)

It was the best of ports (Jaguar, PlayStation), it was the worst of ports (SNES, 3DO, despite Rebecca Heineman's superhuman efforts with the latter). Much like Dickens, its impact outlasted its heyday, timeless in a genre it helped define, as well as becoming a media cause celebre to this day.

STREET FIGHTER II (1991)

3 Votes (Paul Twist, Zoe Kirk-Robinson, Ben Honebone)

Whaddya mean, you prefer *Karate Champ*? This is where multiplayer competitive fighting was truly born, which is surprising given the awfulness of its clunky predecessor. Teens and twenty-somethings across the land were suddenly heard shouting "Hadouken!", "Spinning Bird Kick!", and "You Lose", as *Street Fighter II* fever took hold. It's a fever that's lasted over thirty years.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OOT (1998)

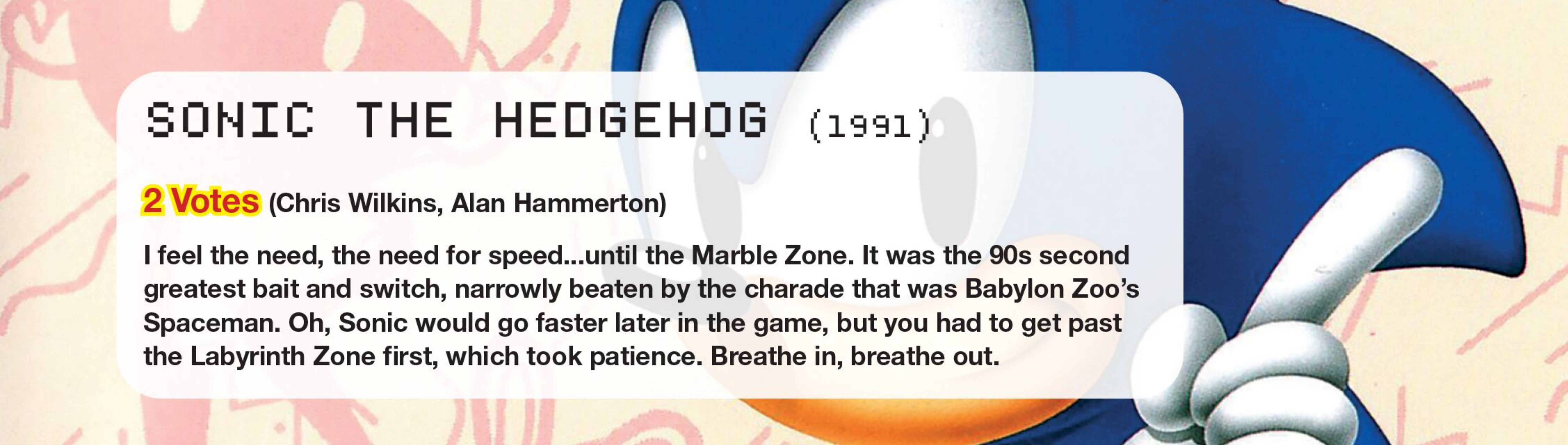
3 Votes (Ben Honebone, Faith Johnson, Zoe Kirk-Robinson)

Including the greatest opening level ever in a game, Inside The Great Deku Tree, and the first time you enter Hyrule Field was one of the most breathtaking experiences of 90s gaming. Is this the Greatest Game of all time? No. Why? Two words: Water Temple. It still owes me a controller, that does.

OUTRUN 2006: COAST 2 COAST (2006)

3 Votes (Alan Hammerton, Zoe Kirk-Robinson, Andrew Fisher)

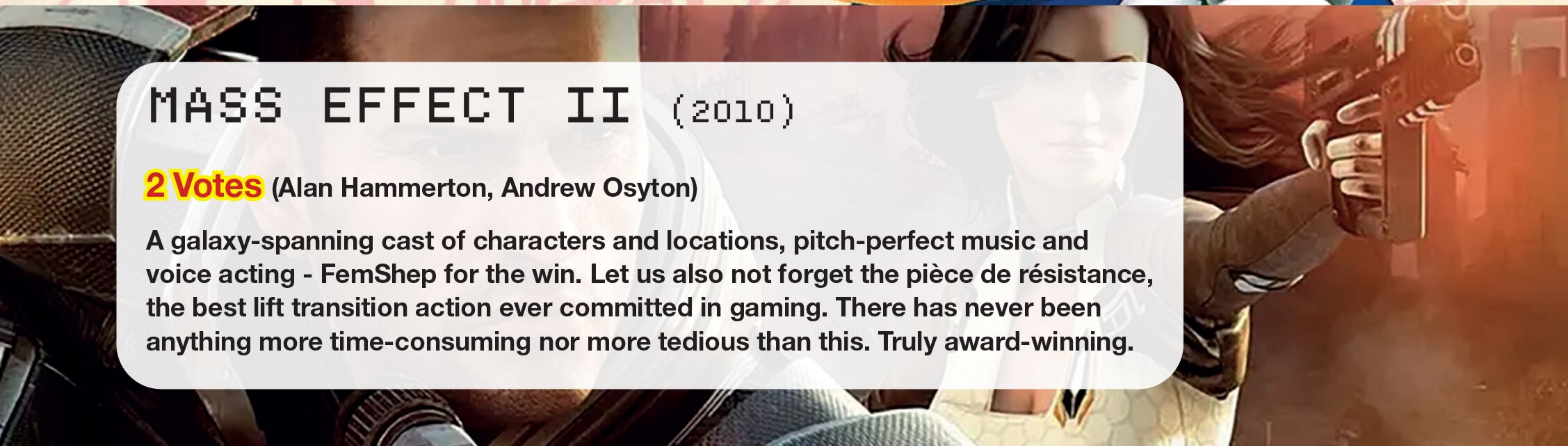
How do you improve on perfection? Easy, add even more Ferraris, tracks with stomach-churning drops, and drifting mechanics that even Ken Block would have been proud of. Mix liberally with some single-player challenges and an online mode, and you have a game worthy of being in our Top 5.

A close-up of Sonic the Hedgehog's face, showing his blue fur, white gloves, and a confident smile.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (1991)

2 Votes (Chris Wilkins, Alan Hammerton)

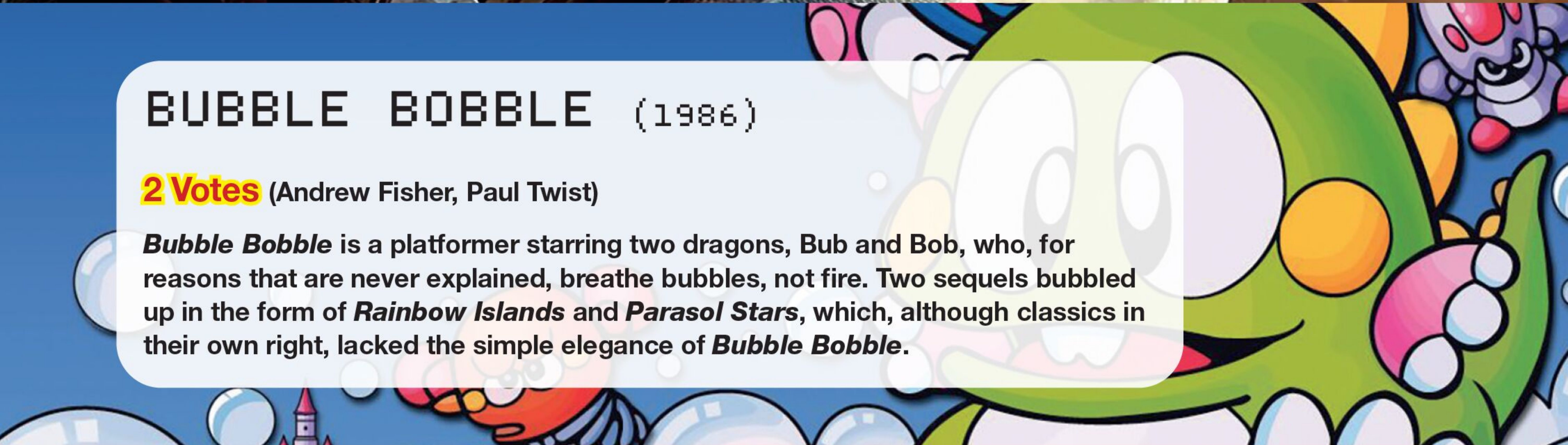
I feel the need, the need for speed...until the Marble Zone. It was the 90s second greatest bait and switch, narrowly beaten by the charade that was Babylon Zoo's Spaceman. Oh, Sonic would go faster later in the game, but you had to get past the Labyrinth Zone first, which took patience. Breathe in, breathe out.

A scene from Mass Effect II showing Commander Shepard in a futuristic, industrial environment, holding a weapon.

MASS EFFECT II (2010)

2 Votes (Alan Hammerton, Andrew Osyton)

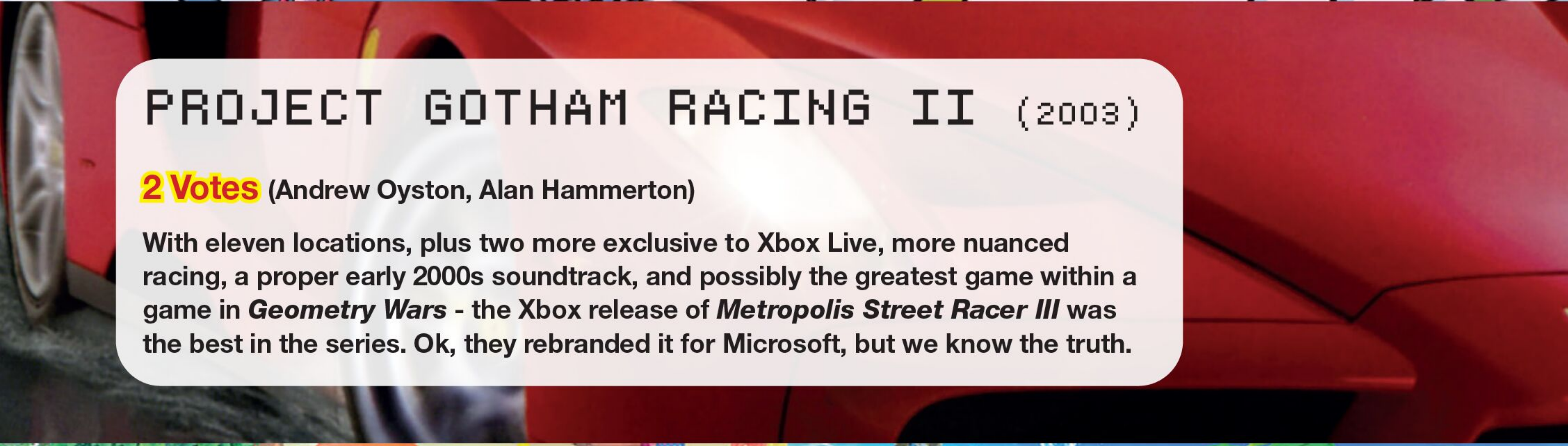
A galaxy-spanning cast of characters and locations, pitch-perfect music and voice acting - FemShep for the win. Let us also not forget the pièce de résistance, the best lift transition action ever committed in gaming. There has never been anything more time-consuming nor more tedious than this. Truly award-winning.

A colorful scene from Bubble Bobble showing two dragons, Bub and Bob, breathing bubbles in a vibrant, cartoonish world.

BUBBLE BOBBLE (1986)

2 Votes (Andrew Fisher, Paul Twist)

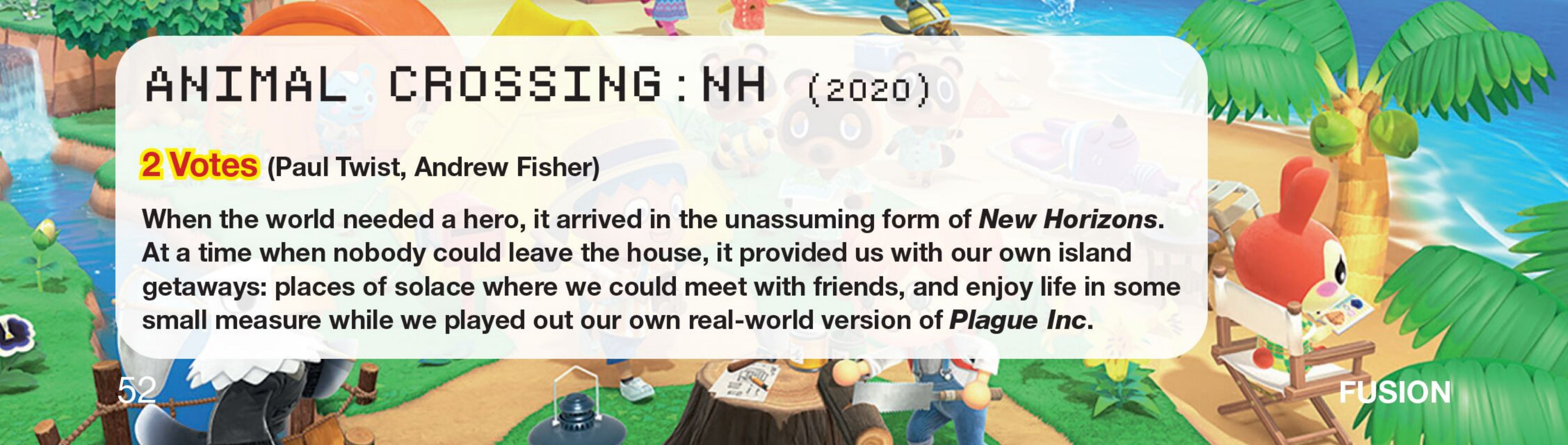
Bubble Bobble is a platformer starring two dragons, Bub and Bob, who, for reasons that are never explained, breathe bubbles, not fire. Two sequels bubbled up in the form of *Rainbow Islands* and *Parasol Stars*, which, although classics in their own right, lacked the simple elegance of *Bubble Bobble*.

A scene from Project Gotham Racing II showing a red sports car racing on a track with a cityscape in the background.

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING II (2003)

2 Votes (Andrew Oyston, Alan Hammerton)

With eleven locations, plus two more exclusive to Xbox Live, more nuanced racing, a proper early 2000s soundtrack, and possibly the greatest game within a game in *Geometry Wars* - the Xbox release of *Metropolis Street Racer III* was the best in the series. Ok, they rebranded it for Microsoft, but we know the truth.

A vibrant scene from Animal Crossing: New Horizons showing a tropical island with a red bird character, a palm tree, and a body of water.

ANIMAL CROSSING: NH (2020)

2 Votes (Paul Twist, Andrew Fisher)

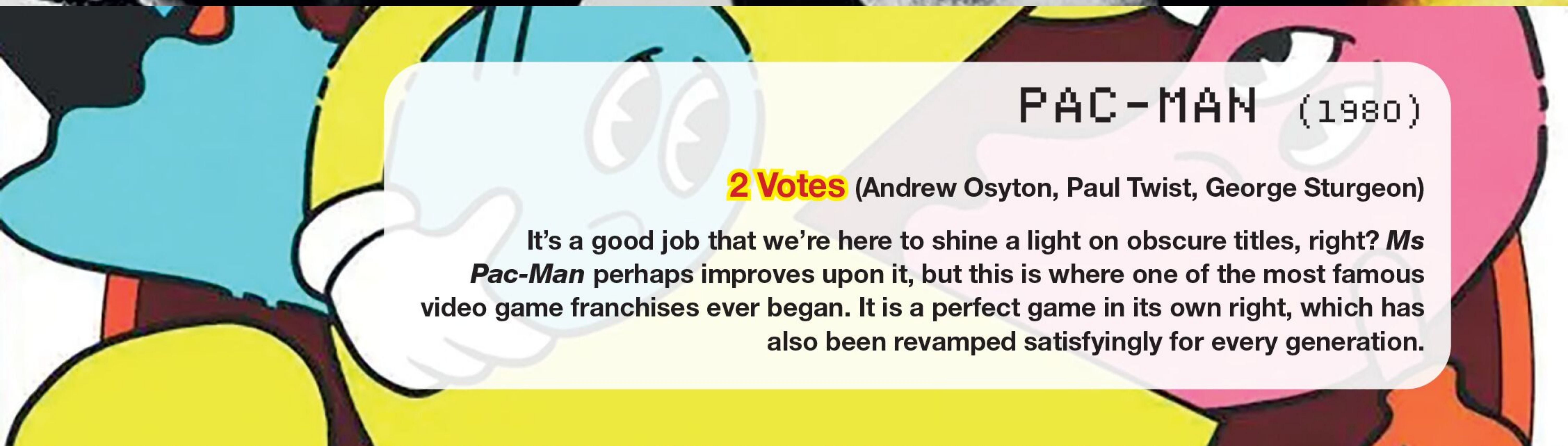
When the world needed a hero, it arrived in the unassuming form of *New Horizons*. At a time when nobody could leave the house, it provided us with our own island getaways: places of solace where we could meet with friends, and enjoy life in some small measure while we played out our own real-world version of *Plague Inc*.



GOLDENEYE (1997)

2 Votes (Ben Honebone, Andrew Oyston)

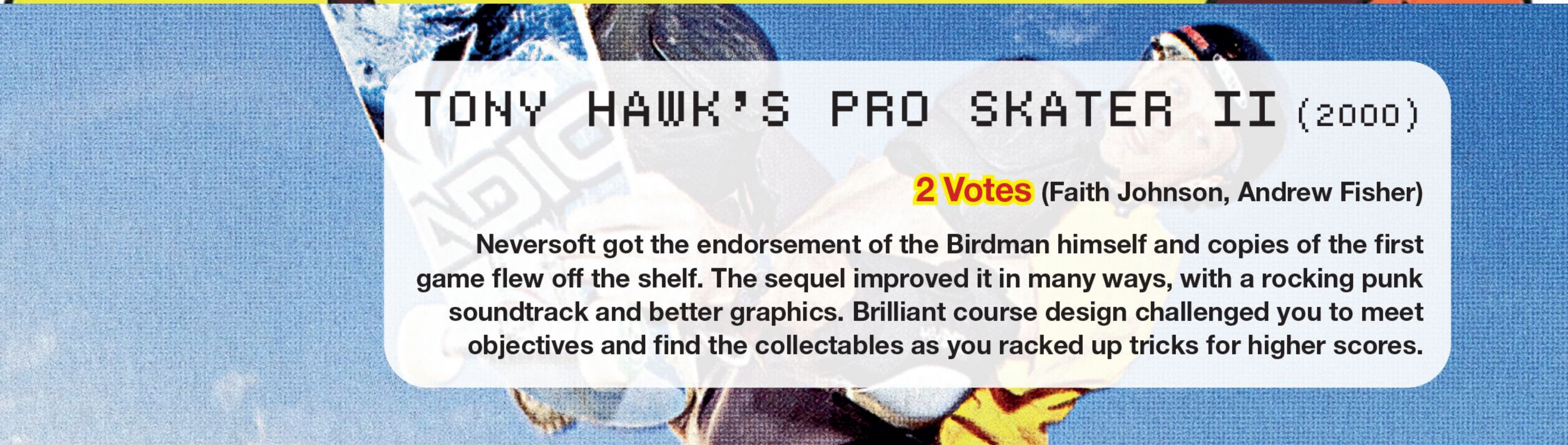
The first proper FPS action on console? Film-accurate architecture? Genuine in-game avatars that looked just like their real-world counterparts? Okay, maybe not that last one, but who can forget the multiplayer? Cheating with Oddjob at ten frames per second! We'd never had it so good.



PAC-MAN (1980)

2 Votes (Andrew Osyton, Paul Twist, George Sturgeon)

It's a good job that we're here to shine a light on obscure titles, right? *Ms Pac-Man* perhaps improves upon it, but this is where one of the most famous video game franchises ever began. It is a perfect game in its own right, which has also been revamped satisfyingly for every generation.



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER II (2000)

2 Votes (Faith Johnson, Andrew Fisher)

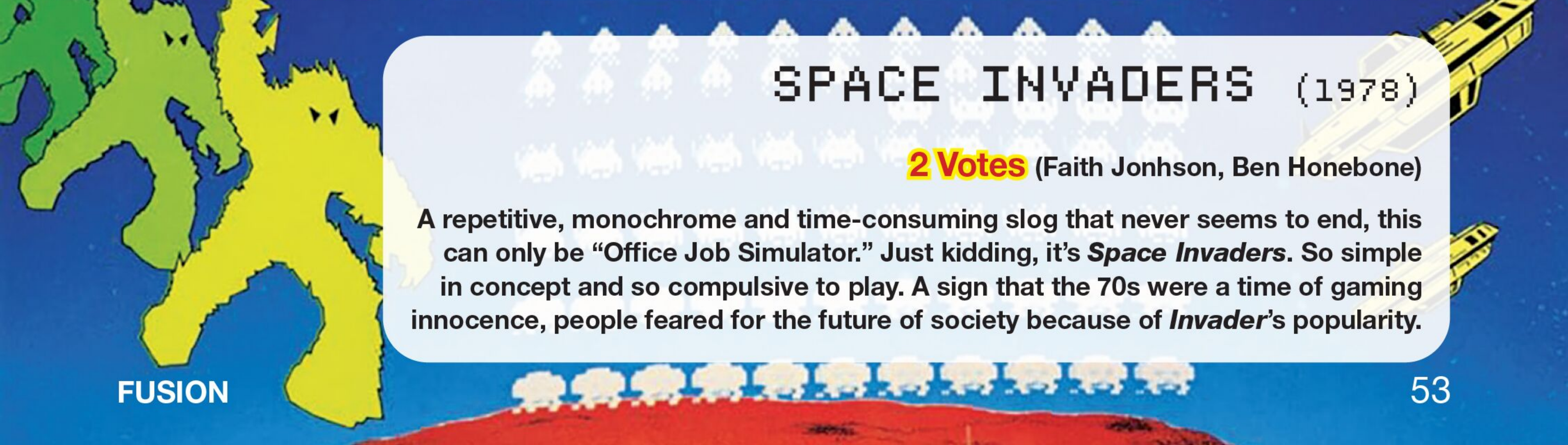
Neversoft got the endorsement of the Birdman himself and copies of the first game flew off the shelf. The sequel improved it in many ways, with a rocking punk soundtrack and better graphics. Brilliant course design challenged you to meet objectives and find the collectables as you racked up tricks for higher scores.



WARIOWARE, INC: MM (2003)

2 Votes (Andrew Fisher, Paul Twist)

Wario became a star on Game Boy, and this debut started a fascinating series. Short, sharp gameplay is constantly changing, with brilliant cartoon characters and settings. Strongest of all are the tributes to classic Nintendo titles, and unlocking extra games will keep you engrossed in this perfect portable playground.



SPACE INVADERS (1978)

2 Votes (Faith Jonhson, Ben Honebone)

A repetitive, monochrome and time-consuming slog that never seems to end, this can only be "Office Job Simulator." Just kidding, it's *Space Invaders*. So simple in concept and so compulsive to play. A sign that the 70s were a time of gaming innocence, people feared for the future of society because of *Invader's* popularity.



SUPER MARIO KART (1992)

2 Votes (Andrew Fisher, Paul Twist)

With super tight controls, two-player “fun”, and a course design that veers between perfection and sadism, *Super Mario Kart* was an educational experience for us all. Particularly when playing against those who saved a red shell until the race’s final moments. You know who you are!

JETPAC (1983)

2 Votes (Chris Wilkins, Andrew Fisher)

We’ve often asked ourselves – Is there a bad version of *JetPac*? Maybe there is, but we’re yet to play it. Perhaps that’s why Ultimate’s epic shooter is so beloved by so many, especially after finding a new audience with Rare Replay on the Xbox. Video game perfection in 16K!

PARADROID (1985)

2 Votes (Paul Morrison, Andrew Fisher)

Andrew Braybrook’s C64 shoot ‘em up *Uridium* is amazing, but this predecessor has a wonderful atmosphere and challenging tactical gameplay. Take over the malfunctioning droids and explore the Dreadnoughts, the line of sight rules making every area tense to explore. Beautifully tuned mechanics make this playable nearly 40 years later.

SUPER MARIO BROS. III (1988)

2 Votes (Zoe Kirk-Robinson, Paul Twist)

Super Mario Bros. remains one of the most playable games ever, but *Super Mario Bros. III* is such a step up it’s hard to believe they were released for the same machine. The game introduced Mario’s raccoon tail power-up, which (obviously) granted Mario flight. After all, raccoons are famed for flying, aren’t they?

RESIDENT EVIL IV (2005)

2 Votes (Paul Morrison, Ben Honebone)

At Fusion magazine, we know our readers. We know that you’ve bought this game more than once. In fact, you’ve probably bought it at least three times, and that’s not including the 2023 remake. Who can blame you? It’s so good, you need to play it on every format you own, We get it. We’ve done it, too. This one is worth it.

George Sturgeon: Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow (GBA), Hogwarts Legacy (PS5), Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order (PS4), Sega Rally Championship (Sega Saturn), Trine II: The Complete Story (PS4), Days Gone (PS4), Assassins Creed: Origins (PS4), Super Mario 64 DS (DS), Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story (DS), Castlevania: Lords of Shadow (PS3), Super Mario Galaxy (Wii), The House of the Dead II (Wii), Darksiders 2 (PS3), Castlevania: Lament of Innocence (PS2), Wario Land II (GBC), Spyro the Dragon (PS4), DOOM (PC), The Wolf Among Us (PS3), Sly Cooper/Raccoon (PS2), Yooka-Laylee and the Impossible Lair (PS4)

Ben Honbeone: Space Invaders (Arcade), Yie Ar Kung-Fu (Arcade/Amstrad), Double Dragon (Arcade), RoboCop (Arcade/Amstrad), Street Fighter II (Arcade/SNES), Killer Instinct (Arcade/SNES), GoldenEye (N64), The Legend of Zelda: OOT (N64), Resident Evil II (PS1/N64), Shadow Man (PC/N64), Half Life II (PC), Resident Evil IV (GC), Capcom Vs SNK II (Arcade/GC), Street Fighter VI (Xbox Series X/PC), Bayonetta (PC/360), Bioshock (PC/360), Dead Space (PC/360), Assassin's Creed (PC/360), Alan Wake (PC/360), Control (Xbox Series).

Andrew Fisher: Wizball (C64), Paradroid (C64), Super Mario World (SNES), Katamari Damacy (PS2), Wario Ware, Inc. Minigame Mania (GBA), Super Metroid (SNES), Jetpac (ZX), Gorf (Arcade), Rock Band (360), Animal Crossing: New Horizons (Switch), Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (Xbox), Bubble Bobble (Arcade/C64), Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 (DC), Portal (PC), Soul Calibur (DC), Outrun 2006: Coast to Coast (Xbox), Tempest 2000 (Jaguar), Blast Corps (N64), The Simpsons Tapped Out (iOS), Super Mario Kart (SNES)

Paul Morrison: Paradroid (C64), The Bard's Tale (C64), Kung-Fu Master (Arcade), Rocket Ranger (Amiga), Landstalker (Mega Drive), Nights... into dreams (Saturn), Star Force (Arcade), Hyper Sports (Arcade), Sid Meier's Sim Golf (PC), Etrian Odyssey (NDS), Resident Evil IV (Gamecube), Red Dead Redemption (Xbox 360), Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords (almost everything), Polybius (PS4VR), Forza Horizon IV (Xbox One/PC), Gradius V (PS2), Beyond Good and Evil (PS2), Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004 (PS2), Halo III:ODST (Xbox 360), Wii Sports Resort (Wii)

Faith Johnson: Sonic III & Knuckles (MD), Baldurs Gate II (PC), The Legend of Zelda: OOT (N64), Space Invaders (Arcade), Ms. Pac-Man (Arcade), Aliens vs Predator (Arcade), Streets of Rage II, Ikaruga (DC), Super Mario World (SNES), Phantasy Star Online (DC), Gunstar Heroes (MD), Ridge Racer Type 4 (PS1), Marvel vs Capcom II (Arcade), Street Fighter IV (360), Final Fantasy X (PS2), Super Mario 64 (N64), Banjo-Kazooie (N64), Worms Armageddon (PC), Command & Conquer Red Alert (PC), Tony Hawk's Pro Skater II (PC)

Paul Twist: Super Mario World (SNES), Super Mario Kart (SNES), Street Fighter II Turbo (SNES), Super Mario Bros (NES), Super Mario Bros III (NES), Pac-Man (arcade), Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Arcade), Bubble Bobble (Arcade), Super Monkey Ball (GC), Tetris (GB), R-Type (ZX/GB), Target: Renegade (ZX), Football Manager (ZX), Sensible World of Soccer (Amiga), The Secret of Monkey Island (Amiga), Moonstone (Amiga), Animal Crossing New Horizons (Switch), Wario Ware, Inc. Minigame Mania (GBA), Street Fighter IV (360), DOOM (PC)

Alan Hammerton: World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King (PC), Formula 1 GP (Amiga), Mass Effect II (360), Outrun 2006: Coast to Coast (Xbox), Ultima 7: The Black Gate (PC), Civilisation VI (PC), Gran Turismo II (PS1), Day of the Tentacle (PC), Speedball II (PC), Millennium 2.2 (Amiga), Densha de Go!! Hashirou Yamanote-sen (PS4), Sonic the Hedgehog (MD), Mario Kart VIII (Switch), Just Cause III (PS4), SuperMarioLand (GB), Project Gotham Racing II (Xbox), Carmaggeddon II (PC), Tekken (PS1), Wipeout (PS1), Daytona USA (Arcade)

Andrew Oyston: Project Gotham Racing 2 (Xbox), Command and Conquer: Red Alert 2 (PC), Halo (Xbox), Sky Odyssey (PS2), Headhunter (DC), Fur Fighters (DC), Broken Sword (PC), Lucy Dreaming (PC), Harpoon (Amiga), Star Fighter 3000 (RISC OS), The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (Xbox360), The Secret of Monkey Island (PC), DOOM (PC), Goldeneye (N64), Donkey Kong 64 (N64), Pilotwings 64 (N64), Uncharted II: Among Thieves (PS3), Eternal Darkness (GC), Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis (PC), Mass Effect II (Xbox360)

Paul Morrison: Paradroid (C64), The Bard's Tale (C64), Kung-Fu Master (Arcade), Rocket Ranger (Amiga), Landstalker (MD), Nights... into dreams (Saturn), Star Force (Arcade), Hyper Sports (Arcade), Sid Meier's Sim Golf (PC), Etrian Odyssey (DS), Resident Evil IV (GC), Red Dead Redemption (360), Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords (almost everything), Polybius (PS4VR), Forza Horizon IV (Xbox One/PC), Gradius V (PS2), Beyond Good and Evil (PS2), Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004 (PS2), Halo III:ODST (Xbox 360), Wii Sports Resort (Wii)

Zoe Kirk-Robinson: Magic Land Dizzy (CPC), OutRun 2006 Coast 2 Coast (PS2), Planescape: Torment (PC), Baldur's Gate (PC), Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag (360), Spec Ops: The Line (360), Mass Effect (360), Minecraft (PC), DOOM II (PC), Flashback (MD), Sonic The Hedgehog II (MD), Pac-Man (Arcade), Galaxian (Arcade), Bosconian (Arcade), Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (PS2), Street Fighter II (Arcade), Super Mario Bros. III (NES), The New Zealand Story (Arcade), The Legend of Zelda: OOT (N64), The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (PC)

Chris Wilkins: Manic Miner (ZX), Ridge Racer (Arcade/PS1), Resident Evil (PS1), Wave Race (N64), Jetpac (ZX), Command and Conquer: Generals (PC), Quake (PC), The Last of Us (PC), Fallout III (PC), Fire and Ice (ZX), Dungeon Keeper (ZX), Populous: The Beginning (PC), Rogue Squadron (GC), James Pond II (Amiga), Sonic The Hedgehog (MD), Twin Eagle (Arcade), Phoenix (Arcade), 3D Starstrike (ZX), Call of Duty : World of War (PS3), Diddy Kong Racing (N64)

FUSION REACTOR

50 ISSUES IN THE LIFE OF THE FUSION TEAM

WE'VE DROPPED THE REACTION GAUGES THIS MONTH BECAUSE IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT EVERYONE HAS ACHIEVED 'FUSION' FOR THIS MOMENTOUS ISSUE. WHAT ARE OUR FONDEST MEMORIES FROM THE LAST 3000 PAGES?

GEORGE STURGEON:

My journey with FUSION began in 2020 when I wrote a review of *Crash Bandicoot XS*, published in Issue 11. As someone who had mainly written online blogs in the past, it was a joy to make the jump to printed magazines. The creative freedom that FUSION encourages has allowed me to create some of our recurring series, such as Super Stages, Badass Bosses, and Musical Marvels. This trinity was designed around the single idea of celebrating the ever-growing world of video games, which is precisely what FUSION is all about. It's a fantastic magazine with a really supportive, like-minded team, and it's always inspiring to see what everyone is up to each month. I've been lucky to have more than 40 articles published, with more in the pipeline. Celebrating the 50th issue is one hell of a milestone!

PAUL TWIST:

Even though I've been reading FUSION since the very first issue, I didn't start writing for the mag until issue 35, when I began the games mag "career" that I'd desired since I was a Speccy mag-reading nipper back in the 1980s. I would've pursued this career much sooner had I not been talked out of it by a careers advisor aged 16! It might not have happened until my 40s, but finally making my print debut was a definite highlight for me. It was also a privilege to share how I'd had to adjust to gaming with one hand following a stroke, which was the subject of my first piece for FUSION. Representation for disabled gamers matters greatly to me, and



I'm forever grateful to Alan and Chris for letting me write about it. Another highlight was when I reviewed the *Cowabunga Collection* in issue 38 - a review I'd been training for for over 30 years.

ANDREW OUSTON:

My highlight is purely narcissistic, and it's issue 33 when my first piece was published. Oh, and issue 34, when my name was spelt correctly for the first time! That's when I knew I had made it. I jest, but seriously, getting to write about older, sometimes forgotten, games is a thrill that never fades. And it's a perfect excuse to re-visit older titles just for the fun of it. However, if I had to pick one highlight, it would be the interview with Tom and Emma from Tall Story Games for issue 40. What was supposed to be a 60-minute chat about *Lucy Dreaming* turned into nearly three hours of laughs, jokes, and anecdotes. It was an absolute hoot.

TOY POLLOI:

I was first asked to write for FUSION back in Issue 6, and since then I have written well over 70 articles across the magazine and various annuals, including two Toy Polloi annuals. It's hard to believe there is so much toy-related



news and information to tell you all about. I'm so pleased that FUSION has reached its first 50 issues and hope it continues for many more.

FAITH JOHNSON:

I will never forget the first moment I saw an article I'd written in a printed magazine. I felt on top of the world and am thankful to Chris for giving me a chance to express my love for games in this way. I think my best articles have been my deep dive into the history of *Christmas Nights*, my interview on *Street Fighter II*, and my article about *Pepsi Invaders* and advertising within gaming. Overall, I feel privileged to be part of a great team of gaming fanatics.

ALAN HAMMERTON:

My journey with FUSION started, appropriately, on a train heading towards Birmingham New Street. I was en route to Revival at Bescot Stadium and spent a good hour of the journey sending out announcements about issue 1 of this new mag. Here we are, fifty issues in, and we are still going strong. I'm immensely proud that we have a great team who put so much passion into each issue, and I want to thank them for being so crucial to everything we do, and thank

you, dear reader – without you believing in us, we would not be here. Happy 50th FUSION! See you at 100!

ANDREW FISHER:

It's been great fun being part of FUSION since the start. I have particularly enjoyed writing on a variety of subjects, from game reviews to toys. The highlights for me were the hours of research that went into the *Resident Evil* Special and spending time playing the *bit Generations* games on Game Boy Advance for the Japan special.

BEN HONEBONE:

I discovered Fusion Retro Books after purchasing Chris and Roger's book on the history of Ocean Software in 2018. Looking back at my complete purchase history on the website, it appears that I started reading FUSION around issue 13, but it wasn't until issue 24 that I decided to submit an article. A new regular feature (that lasted two issues) called 'Best Of, Worst Of' invited readers to send in an article about the best and worst items in their retro collections. Seeing reader Carl Bungay's article printed in issue 24 inspired me to do the same.

As a singer, I'm no stranger to writing lyrics and music, but I hadn't attempted any journalism or creative writing before. At first, I thought I had failed because there was no response to the email with my article attached. A month or so later, I sent a follow-up email asking for some feedback, and Chris responded soon after, apologising for the email getting lost in his "chaotic Inbox". We ended up chatting on the phone, and it turned out that my favourite mag was looking for a layout and design artist. Chris suggested that I contact someone called Alan Hammerton (the plot thickens!) and have a go at doing the layout for my 'Best Of, Worst Of' article myself. The rest, as they say, is history. Issue 26 will always be a little special to me because it features my first published article and layout. ■

THAT MOMENT WHEN...





YOUR MAGAZINE ARRIVES
FUSION RETRO BOOKS (EST 2006)



FUSION RETRO BOOKS